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PSE2

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

PREMIERE ISSUE ONLY $2.99

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PSE2

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

Volume 1 • Issue 1 • October 2000

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THE ISSUE AT HAND

What happened to PSExtreme?!?

If, for some strange reason beyond your control, you happened to miss last month's issue of PSExtreme (which should be the only reason you're not getting EVERY issue, right?), then you might be wondering what the heck is this extra-large magazine labeled "PSE2", and where is your favorite PlayStation magazine that you've so fanatically grown to love and cherish? The answer, my friends, is that PSExtreme still lives and breathes in these pages, it's just in the process of going through a dramatic transformation/evolution, coinciding with the launch of Sony's new miracle machine. Beginning with this issue, you will find we've overhauled the whole book, from the front cover to the back page, starting with a new, low newsstand price (now an easy on the pocketbook amount of $2.99), and ending with a brand new look and design. While we will continue to bring you the same excellent coverage of everything that is PlayStation and PlayStation2, we will also be expanding these pages to cover the world of "Computer Entertainment" as it pertains to the PlayStation2. This means you'll see features and articles on Broadband gaming, high-end audio/video equipment, DVD movie reviews and previews, and anything and everything else this 128-bit trojan horse of a video game console will be able to do once it is sitting atop the entertainment center in your living room. Of course, that doesn't mean we will be sacrificing coverage of all of the other good stuff that you've come to love from our magazine. We will still have every PS and PS2 game previewed and reviewed, plenty of codes and strategies (a dedicated strategy section is coming, promise!), interviews with developers and publishers, all of the up-to-the-minute news, and, of course, in-depth looks at some of the bigger games coming out in the future (let me be the first to mention the name Herdy Gerdy).

Now, for the issue at hand. You might have noticed that this issue is heavy on PS2 previews and a bit light in the features department (if you've already skipped ahead that is — which is okay, nobody really reads the editorial page anyway). Due to our deadline and timing issues, we thought it would be best to get everyone up to speed with what's on the immediate horizon before the deluge of PS2 games became reviewable. Next month's issue will be much more in-depth, with plenty of pertinent features, some really cool exclusive first-looks and every launch title reviewed. Not that this issue doesn't have its share of good things; We've got a hands-on preview of THQ's Summoner, as well as a brief chat with their head honcho, Brain Farrell, ten PlayStation games reviewed, including Spiderman and Alien Resurrection, and the first info and shots on Edios' Tomb Raider Chronicles. I really hope you enjoy our first issue of PSE2. We had such a great ride with the original PlayStation over the last five years and plan on continuing the experience for the next five and beyond. As always, thanks for reading — we'll see you next month.

EDITOR BIOS

GARY STRASSBERG

Saddened by his father's recent passing, Gary has decided to dedicate everything he writes to his dear old dad. After all, he's the one who brought home the family's first gaming system more than 20-some years ago — an ancient relic known as Odyssey. Little did the Strassbergs realize what he was starting!

CURRENTLY PLAYING

NASCAR 2001
Parasite Eve 2
Threads of Fate
Nightmare Creatures 2

GREG OFF

Greg is as happy as a clam since Electronic Arts dropped the gaming goodness that is SSX Snowboarding into his PS2. Since that fateful day, he has been nothing but a joy to be around — a walking smile some would say. What he doesn't know is we've secretly replaced SSX with Sky Surfer. Things are going to get ugly around here.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

SSX Snowboarding
Dynasty Warriors 2
Smuggler's Run
Medal of Honor: Underground

DARIEN ALLEN

Darien thinks the true formula for a console to succeed is: "the stupider the name, the better the sales". With that in mind, he's looking for potential partners to fund the next great evolution in gaming — The Super DarienGamingMegaStation Blaster 128 — some people you keep around just because you feel bad for them.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Legend of Dragoon
Virtua Tennis
Giant Gram 2000

DAVE WINDING

Dave is growing more bullish on the launch of PS2 by the day. With games like SSX and Smuggler's Run starting to land on his desk, life is getting good. His biggest complaint right now is that there are too many good games, across all platforms, and too little time to play them all. Imagine that — needing to take a vacation from working on game magazines and books so that you can actually PLAY games!

CURRENTLY PLAYING

SSX Snowboarding
X-Squad
Smuggler's Run
Heavy Metal fakk2
Swat 3
Quake 3

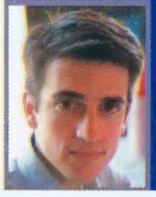
TIM LINDQUIST

Tim doesn't write anything except the funny bits. He makes sure the magazine meets the highest quality standards and has an extremely efficient production process, so that there's plenty of time left over for playing and dilly-dallying. Of all the staff, he owns the most coin-op arcade games (around 40). The next closest is Eric, who owns one. Androvich used to own one too, but Tim took it away from him.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Unreal Tournament
Crazy Climber
Diablo II
Cloak & Dagger
KISS: Psycho Circus
Snacks 'n Jaxson

MARK ANDROVICH



Mark recently returned from the Classic Gaming Expo in Las Vegas, where he was finally able to complete his collection of double ender, X-rated 2600 carts. Now that he has finally found Beat 'em and Eat 'em and Custer's Revenge, he can focus his attention on searching for anatomically correct Cabbage Patch dolls.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Spyro 3
Tekken Tag
Tenchu 2
Zelda DX

ERIC WINDING

Joe Retro, as he is frequently called, has been surpassed this month by Mr Off, the new King of the Collectors. It seems that Greg has been receiving more crazy little systems from overseas, stuff nobody ever knew existed. All Eric could do to keep up was buy a copy of John Madden Football for the Apple II (for $2.00!!).

CURRENTLY PLAYING

SSX Snowboarding
Dave Mira BMX
MLB 2001
Madden Football

5:14 AM Chicago, Illinois.

Check out the curves. Then get undercover.

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There's some hot topics to discuss in the news this month, including Tony Hawk on the PS2, Bill's tounge-slips, Japanese PS2 sales numbers, Oddworld delays, Stuntman plans, and the UK's PS2 woes.

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Codes are the guts of our magazine. If there's one thing that a good magazine depends on, it's good codes. We pride ourselves on the quality of codes we provide and we know you'll enjoy entering them on your controller.

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Sure, any Joe Schmoe can review a game, but it takes real talent to write a concise and accurate hardware review and we do it upright. Check out our peripheral section, where we review the coolest stuff you can lay your hands on.

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What launch title game is so rad, so neat and so fun, that we felt the urge to feature it on the very first cover of PSE2? It's Summoner! Check out our three page knockout layout on their hot, hot game. Read-on, buds!

Previews 26

We've got one heck of a big preview section to present here for you, since most every PS2 game worth a look is still in development, which means we can preview it for you now, so you can see if you'll want play it later and keep an eye out for it.

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A big succulent bulb of juicy, cool, melon-like goodness is packed in every review section. This one features a particularly soft, squishy and mouth-watering selection of reviews for your optic pleasure.

DVD 58

Since the PS2 can play DVD's, we feel it would be prudent for us to cover a few titles each month, to let you know what is worth watching while you're waiting for the next PS2 game to be released.

Final Word 59

When the book's all done and there are no games left to look at, this is the page that'll gently walk you out of the issue — with a little somthing to think about while you wait for your next issue to arrive in the mail. Thanks, and have a nice day.

On the cover

Summoner

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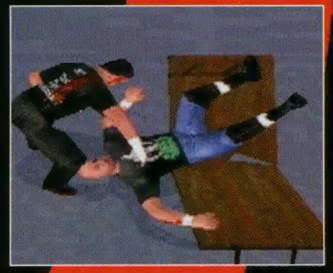

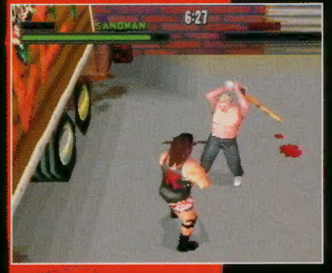

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Strong Language
Mature Sexual Themes

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From the new Shoot Out and Practice Modes, to the expansion teams and up to the minute rosters, we've captured
PlayStation
NHLPA
EVERYONE
E
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ESRB

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HOT TOPIC

First, I'm glad to see that so many of you are reading the magazine. Although the majority of responses I received were profanity-laden garbage, there were a few articulate readers who replied to my words about RPGs. Frankly, I still don't understand what all the fuss is about.

I've spent (wasted?) thousands of hours playing thousands of videogames, and yet I never have liked RPG's. I gave my reasons, yet I was quite surprised to learn that many people feel that I have no right to state my opinion. Apparently, I am not supposed to have any strong feelings one way or another. Somehow, those of you who refuse to be "judgmental" about the games we all play are morally superior. I suppose it has to do with our current politically-correct climate, where the worst thing you can be is intolerant. If our neighbor believes that his tennis shoe is a Supreme Being and worships it, for example, we aren't supposed to criticize him since there is no absolute truth. I just don't get it.

If I told you that I liked classical and rock and roll music, would I be criticized for not liking reggae or country? Why, then, should I have to like every type of videogame? If I told you that I don't understand all the fuss over the Backstreet Boys or Britney Spears, is that an insult to the people who buy their albums? Well, perhaps, but people criticize popular culture all the time. Isn't that what restaurant, art, movie, television, book, and videogame reviewers are for? Why, then, can't I say that I don't understand why people are crazy about Final Fantasy without being perceived as insulting? Geez! It's a good thing I didn't say that I hate Harry Potter...

With all due respect to my colleague Gary Strassberg, who wrote last issue's Hot Topic while I was in strategy guide writer's purgatory, I don't see Sega.Net or any of the on-line plans for PlayStation2 becoming more than a footnote in the history of videogames: joining X-Band, GameLine, and other failed attempts.

Sega has a better chance at success due to the built-in modem, but you've got to figure in the cost of monthly Internet access and the inconvenience of tying up a home's single telephone line so Johnny can get on-line and shoot at people from across the country. Chu Chu Rocket notwithstanding, the majority of on-line console games will be FPS titles such as Unreal Tournament and Quake III. Considering the total number of Dreamcasts which have been sold so far, and the fact that probably three out of five owners aren't interested in FPS games, I doubt that Sega.net will be successful. Even though some non-FPS games such as NFL 2K1 and NBA 2K1 can be played over the Net, there is still the question of whether or not they can get people to pay to play. Personally, I'd rather lead the 49'ers to victory over my neighbor's Packers with him sitting on the couch next to me, not against some anonymous person half the country away.

Sony's reliance upon cable modems might be the way to go, but the technology isn't quite there. Not everyone is able to use DSL, for example, and in the case of the PS2, the modem comes at an additional cost. Then there's the cost of monthly service.

If anything, the successful marriage between consoles and the Internet will come about when players are able to purchase game content or download additional levels/rosters at a reasonable price without having to leave their couch — not when they can frag each other over the phone lines like PC gamers do.

Mark Androvich

Dear PSE2,

I should start by saying that I work for Babbage's, and that none of my feelings here represent nor are indicative of the corporation's stand on any issue. I feel sorry for the guy from EB who sent you that piece of mail regarding Bleem last month. I'm sure you got thousands of letters, and fortunately for you, one of them sounded retarded enough to help you prove your point (pimpin' out his car?! sheesh.)

At any rate, he had a good point, which you still were unable to give any decent type of answer to. I don't have the old rag in front of me, so I'll paraphrase you, and please correct me. "How about this for retailers? If you carry Bleem for the Dreamcast, Sony doesn't ship you the PS2..."

And in your response to EB Guy, you simply state that you don't see why Bleem is going up against The Giant again, as you feel their PC product stinks.

Regarding Sony not Shipping PS2s to Retailers who chose to sell Bleem...

Do you have any idea how big of a lawsuit we would be able to throw on Sony if they did that? It is illegal in the market to blackball one retailer and not another, simply because you do not like their choice of products. SCEA can regulate whether or not we carry SCEJ products, and could shut down supply for a retailer that sold import games in the U.S. They cannot regulate what we carry for a different platform or say that since we have Simpson's Mousepads, they won't ship us product x.

Secondly, perhaps you remember how preorders stood for the Dreamcast. Our company alone had over 100,000, over half of the total in the U.S. How many orders do you think we have for the PS2 right now? I believe it's somewhere near 175,000. Although, most of those are not for 10/26/00 due to Sony's inability to provide product at launch. Point is... how stupid would Sony have to be to shut down their biggest customer for innovative products and new technology? Only as stupid as someone with a large circulation trying to propagate a retarded, unsubstantiated rumor.

Regarding Bleem going up against the Giant with their "stinky" products...

Am I wrong or weren't you guys at E3? Perhaps you missed the booth that had more people around it than the total number of people standing in Sony's huge worthless booth at any given time. Or, all those people crowded around the MGS2 movie trailer?? There was an equally big crowd around the covered booth of Bleem, and when they opened, not only did everyone feel it was worth the wait, but more magazines, companies, buyers, and yes, even other exhibitors, gave Bleem for the Dreamcast "Best Product at E3." Did you actually see it? Did you actually use it? Or were you trying to figure out why Gran Turismo 2000 didn't look any different... (btw Gran Turismo 2, running on the Dreamcast through Bleem looked TONS better than Gran Turismo 2000 running on the PS2.)

As for the lawsuits and why they are going head-to-head again? Because they've won every step of the way. Anyone that knows what's going on knows that Sony doesn't really have a legal case; They are simply trying to drain Bleem of their money and discourage them. Now Bleem has the resources to take it the other direction. For instance, were you aware that this year, because of Sony's arrogant whining last year, Bleem got an injunction against Sony so that they couldn't mess with their booth? Similar countersuits are being filed, alongside Sony's long line of illegitimate charges. Will it hurt Sony? Not likely. But it will set precedent for things to come years from now and Sony understands this and doesn't like it. I laugh when I picture getting Bleem 2 in for the X-Box that plays PS2 games... Sony's reaction is a bit different.

On a side note, the PC version of Bleem is very dependent on how good of a gaming machine you have. It works awesome on a PII450 with 128 MB of RAM and a Voodoo 5. But it's somewhat mediocre on a PII266 with 64 megs and an ATI-anything. There's only one type of Dreamcast though, which enabled them to optimize the source code for that particular machine, so that in almost all situations, it runs fantastic in comparison with it's PC brother, regardless of how good your PC is.

The PS2 uses the original BIOS to maintain compatibility, which runs the game in the same resolution. The Dreamcast runs PS1 games at 4 times that resolution. You're an unauthorized magazine — what is being slipped to you under the table for you to not recognize how good of a product this is? Or are you really just that dumb? Are you the whore of PSX mags? Is Sony your pimp? Bleem for the Dreamcast is a good thing for PlayStation fans. Your favorite games will simply be that much better. I know you hate Sega, but this isn't about Sega, it's about PSX games and being able to play them with better graphics. Sony still makes a mint from each game they sell; If anything, Bleem saves them money from not taking a hit on selling the hardware. I feel I am now beating a dead horse. You obviously made up your minds about Bleem as soon as it was

announced, did no product research, ignored it at E3, and now you feel you have to make up a bunch of crap to protect your little grey box. And unlike EB Guy's letter... this one is well written, and brings out a lot of points that readers of this magazine agree with, so I know there's no chance you'll print it. Just make sure that ALL of the editorial staff reads it.

Thanks,
Derek Jones

Sigh. It's getting boring explaining reality to folks who put blinders on their own eyes and use name-calling and unfounded accusations in place of hard facts. Are you advising people that it is illegal for a person or company to refuse to sell their product to another person or company, for whatever reason they choose? If Sony decided they didn't want to sell PlayStations in the entire state of Wisconsin because they didn't like the temperature there, it's their right. It's their product. Of course, they wouldn't do that, because they'd lose money. Sony's not stupid. Please, don't try to give legal advice until you've passed the Bar. Bleem, the company, has wasted all their time and resources fighting lawsuits and the product they've been fighting over doesn't even deliver what it promised. Sure, they won the suits, but at what cost? You can barely get a single game to work properly with Bleem without downloading updates or fiddling with settings. You want us to give respect to that? Nah. It's not a mass-market product. It's an enthusiast "wow toy" for the technically minded PC gamer, not the console gamer. Sure, Bleem on the DC may work better than the PC version because they'll hand tweak it to work with the every one of the 100 games that each "pack" is for, and the DC, being a console, is a fixed platform unlike the myriad of different configurations the PC has. It'll still be a gimmick. It won't sell in any significant numbers as long as people have to pay extra for it and perform extra steps to play their old games on it. It doesn't matter how good they look. If it's not built into the system, most people won't use it. The rest of your senseless raving is so obviously flawed, we really don't need to say much. We'll just say, again, we're all gamers here. We all love playing good games on whatever system they happen to be on. Sure, PSE2 is a PlayStation-only magazine. We also published other platform-specific magazines. They didn't make money. PSExtreme does. Duh. We also like poking fun at the silly things companies do, whether it's Sega, Nintendo or Sony. We are paid critics, after all. Be happy!

Dear PSE2,

First of all let me say that you guys are one of the best PSX mag's I've seen in a while. Good job! Now, I would consider myself a good gamer, but I'm pretty specific on the types that I play. I like playing RPG's, Online, and some Fighting games the most. I'm not into Sports games that much. Now, in the September issue of PSEX, There was a certain Person who I shall not name, who wasn't very smart.
Me and this person do have something in common though, we both work at Electronics Boutique (Well, he works at Electronics Botique, I mean, you might as well say I work at Electronic Bowteeks!) Anyways, without naming who this person is, I believe he did make so many very idiotic assumptions. First off, he just assumes that he's more Hardcore then a magazine, because he has so many Gaming Consoles. (I don't have that many 'cause, like I said, I like RPG's the most, so SNES, and PSX are the only true good RPG consoles).
He also can't go through a letter without saying #$&^, *%^, ^*#@(ing), and sh#%. This makes me lose any and all respect for this person, along with saying he "pimps" in his car, and his nickname is "MastaMind" which makes me lose even more of the respect I might have had for him.
Anyways, enough ranting about fools, to my question(s):

1) I know this has probably already been addressed, like a few years ago, but why is it that Squaresoft discontinued Final Fantasy Tactics?
2) At work, it says that FF 10, and 11 will be released before FF9, do you think that'll fall through, or do you think that 10 and 11 will be delayed longer, and lastly —
3) Could you send me some information on how FF11 will work? I mean will it be Ultima Online like, or Everquest, or what? I'm just curious, since I haven't read much about it, and wondering if you knew.

Thanks for your time!
- James

1. Square hasn't discontinued Final Fantasy Tactics. No way, no how. They just haven't announced any new ones yet.
2. That's just plain wrong. FFIX will definitely be released before X or XI. That must have been a typo.
3. Square is still in the early stages of development on FFXI, so things could easily change as new technologies emerge, but their plan, right now, seems to follow the Everquest model.

Dear PSEX,

I am writing in regards to the codes you published in the PSExtreme issue #57 Volume 5 - issue 9 - August 2000. Specifically the Codes for Jedi Power battles. The codes are crap, they don't work at all! Why do you publish codes that do not work? The first code listed is supposed to give all levels, weapons, and invincibility. Well I did exactly what is listed and nothing happened! I am very disappointed with your accuracy...

Mike

Sorry!!! We can't test ALL the codes, but we try. Sometimes a bogus code or two slips through, usually because they worked on our beta versions of the game, but not on the released versions. It's hard to catch those!

Dear PSE2,

Greetings.. I plan to release a fanzine/magazine on January 1st of 2001 and have some questions regarding the use of art, mainly game/comic book characters. Do I need any type of license so that I can use, say a drawing of Ryu and Ken as a cover page for my book? I plan on using all original art and not existing drawings of characters... Thank you for your time and I will have more questions in the future if you don't mind taking some time...

Carlos Flores

No, you don't need any special permission to do that sort of thing, since you'll be reporting on the subject matter as a journalist, you get special use of copyrighted material without having to ask or even acknowledge the copyrights. Have Fun!

Send Message

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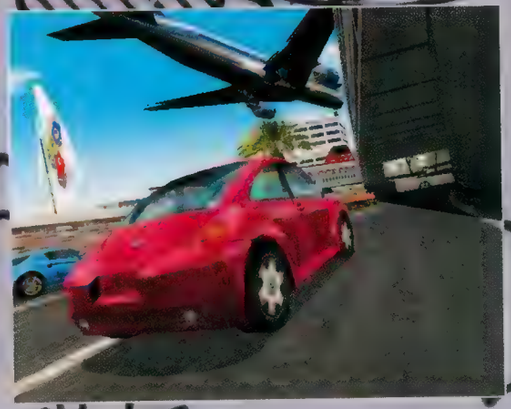

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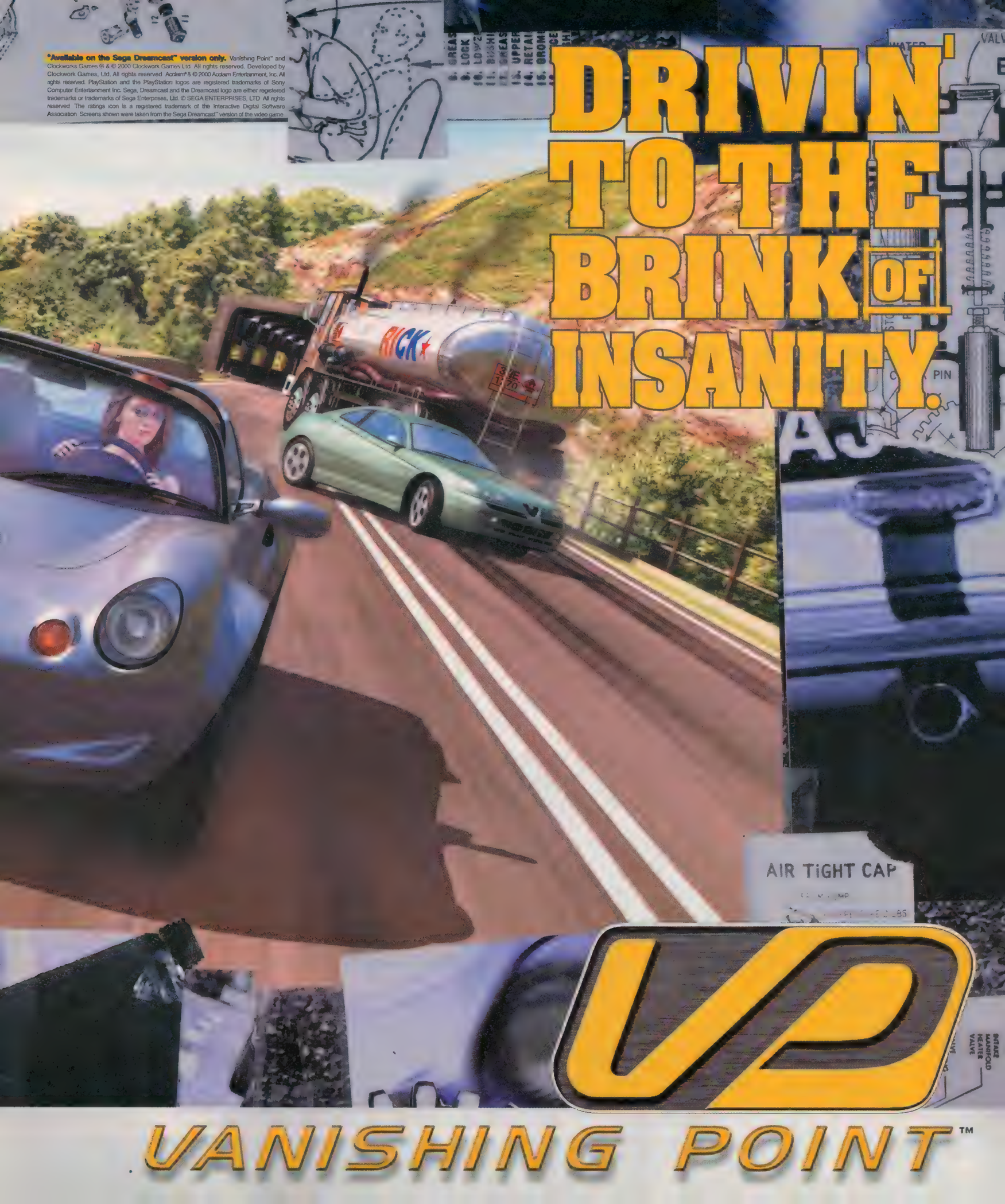

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FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

News Editor: Dave Winding

TONY HAWK 3 GRINDING TOWARD PS2!

Activision is planning on releasing its first Tony Hawk game for PS2 early next year — according to a financial planning report issued by the company. While this will surprise very few gamers or TH fans, it will be somewhat surprising if developer, Neversoft, can turn around the game that quickly. It wasn't at E3 and not one screen shot has yet to leave through Activision's firewall. But, you can bet that we are looking forward to it, and will give you the scoop once we've... scooped it!

UH, BILL... DON'T YOU MEAN "PLAYSTATION2"?

In an interview with Red Herring, Bill Gates had the following to offer about the potential success of Xbox:

"PlayStation 1 is the leader at the moment... in videogames, as new platforms have come along, it has been the company that has been able to conceptualize the platform as being more powerful who have been able to take the lead *(Well... N64 is more powerful than PS1... but we digress)*. Now, Sony is a great company, and is actually a partner of ours in a huge number of things. But in the case of videogames, Xbox and PlayStation 2 are actually going to compete. They're only slightly different time frames: PlayStation is out this year *(Well... 1995, but why quibble?)*, and Xbox is out next year. In terms of richness of its graphics, and having a hard disc storage, and what you can do with stored images and music, with interactivity — the disc, and the power we have in the platform just brings it to a whole new level ... You won't even think of PlayStation and Xbox as being in the same generation." *(We don't, and we pray to God that your hardware team doesn't either!)*

PS2 JUST KEEPS SELLING AND SELLING

SCEI recently announced that PS2 sales had reached an almost unbelievable 3,000,000 units in Japan, in the four month period that the system has been available. This statistic is made even more shocking by the fact that there is barely anything worth playing on it (RR5, TTT, Evergrace and Paradise Golf are the exceptions). To give you a point of reference for just how amazing the sales numbers are; It took over two years to sell-through that many PS1's in the US! Can North America repeat the success that Sony has found in The Land of the Rising Sun? Only time (and money, and desire, and a library of good games) will tell.

ODDWORLD'S RELEASE DATE "MUNCH'D"

Infogrames recently revealed that their much-anticipated adventure game, "Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee" was being delayed. The game was originally expected for the North American launch of PS2. In fact, it was the first American developed game that was shown to the media in a working form. However, the developers (Oddworld Inhabitants) have been very vocal in their frustration with the PS2 development environment and it seems like a delay was inevitable. Infogrames now expects the game to ship in June, 2001.

INFOGRAMES STUNTMAN MAKING PS2 LEAP!

According to computerandvideogames.com, Reflections (Driver) will be developing "Stuntman" for Infogrames. Built around the exploits of a newbie film stuntman, the game will take you from humble beginnings on B-movies to the dizzy heights of multi-million dollar Hollywood blockbusters.

"As you progress through the game the stunts get more difficult," said Reflections MD Martin Edmonson. "All the action is vehicle-based, not just involving cars."

Reflections has been working on the title for over a year, and they still have quite a ways to go. PlayStation 2 development seems to have been more difficult for the group than originally thought, as it has with so many others. "The development time on Stuntman is quite long, as it's taken everyone a lot longer than we thought to get their heads round PlayStation 2," Edmonson added. "We're hoping to get the game out some time next summer."

Stuntman is set to feature more than 20 stunts, six location-shot films to complete and over 10 types of vehicle. According to Infogrames, you'll also have the ability to create and edit your own movies based on the stunts you've performed, in a similar way to the film editing function in Driver. as soon as we can snag a few screens on this one, you'll find them here!

UK GETTING THE HIGH, HARD ONE ON PS2

AMERICAN RETAILERS GETTING NERVOUS

Reports on the internet (not confirmed by Sony but, then again, NOTHING is these days) have SCEE shipping half of the PS2's that were originally expected — down to 100,000 units from the 200,000 that were originally allocated — and (this part is official), the system will not launch until November 24, a month later than promised. While this number is still more significant than the number of PS1's that were originally shipped for the UK launch in 1996, American retailers have seen the writing on the wall and are, across the board, ending their pre-order campaigns. The following is a short list of a few key retailers and how they are dealing with the unknown:

- **Babbages/Software, etc.** stores are taking preorders only for the third shipment, which is scheduled to arrive around Christmas. The chain's online store, Gamestop.com, are only promising delivery of PS2 systems on October 26 if the customer's order was placed before July 4.
- **Electronics Boutique** is no longer taking pre-orders through its stores. EBWorld, it's e-tail location, is still taking orders, but can not promise that new customers lacing orders will be receive their PS2's on October 26.
- **Funcoland** (owned and operated by the same group as Babbages, etc.) has stopped preorders at its retail stores. It will take preorders online, at Funcoland.com, but only customers who have ordered before August 2 are promised a PS2 on October 26.
- **Toys 'R Us** has stopped all preorders. However, it hopes to make some additional console units available at its stores at launch. ToysRUs.com is still taking preorders, but is making no guarantees about the eventual delivery date.

What this all means is that nobody has any kind of clue about the PS2 launch. Sony isn't talking, and many people in the industry believe that THEY don't know what's going on with the launch. Hell, 3,000,000 people in Japan (according to SCEI) have purchased the PS2 as a bookend, since they have very few actual GAMES to play. So, who knows? Well, we do... don't expect more than 1.0 (maybe 1.5) million units to make it to the US before Santa loads up the sleigh. (Hey! How many is he getting? I hope HE isn't being embargoed!) Drive to a Wal-Mart as far away from the nearest major city as possible, then buy the PS2 with Smuggler's Run, X-Squad, SSX Snowboarding and Madden NFL 2001, plus whatever else you can afford. This will assure a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year!

TRST TOP SELLING TITLES

JULY 2ND - JULY 15TH 2000

1 — Activision's Tony Hawk Pro Skater

PS2 Platinum — last month 1 — average retail price $36

2 — Sony's Legend of Dragoon

PS2 Platinum — last month ** — average retail price $41

3 — Take 2's Spec Ops

Bronze — last month 3 — average retail price $10

4 — THQ's WWF Smackdown

PS2 Gold — last month 2 — average retail price $40

5 — Namco's Tekken 3

PS2 Gold — last month 6 — average retail price $22

6 — GT Interactive's Driver

PS2 Gold — last month ** — average retail price $23

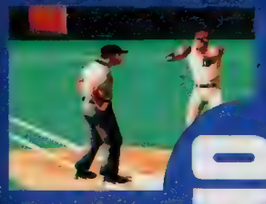
7 — 989 Studios' Syphon Filter 2

PS2 Gold — last month 4 — average retail price $39

8 — 989 Studios' Syphon Filter

PS2 Platinum — last month 8 — average retail price $20

9 — EA's Triple Play 2001



Bronze — last month 9 — average retail price $40

10 — Sony's Gran Turismo 2

PS2 Platinum — last month 10 — average retail price $40

** Not in Top 10 Last Month. The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRSTS.

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service, 900 West Shore Road, Port Washington, NY 11050 • (516) 625-2294

SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!

Each month, we'll pick out a code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a whole bunch of really cool stuff from MonsterCable! If you're the lucky winner, you'll get their excellent GameLink 200 AV Cable featuring nitrogen gas-injected dielectric insulator delivering maximum video signal strength for the clearest, sharpest picture possible, and the GameLink 300 S-Video AV Cable for even sharper, more crisp video then the standard composite cable, and the LightWave 100 Fiber Optic to take advantage of the PlayStation 2's Dolby Digital and DTS capabilities and lastly, the PowerStation 600 with 700 joules of surge protection to protect your baby! Wow! Those are some awesome prizes you can win for just sending in codes!

WE HAVE A WINNER!

This month's lucky winner is Esther Wilson from Modesto, CA. Congrats!

Nightmare Creatures II

Display Hero Life Left
Press L2, R2, ■, Select at the Cheat menu.

One Hit Kill Enemy
Press L1 + L2 + R1 + ■ + Select at the Cheat menu press.

Level Select
Press and hold L1 + R2 + ● + ■. Press ← or → to select your level.

Hero Unlimited Lives
Pause the game, then press and hold R2 + L1 + ■ + ● + Select.

Unlimited Continues
Go to the cheat menu and press L1 + R2 + R1 + Select. This cheat will give you unlimited continues.

Invincible Enemies
Pause the game and access the cheat menu. Now press R2 + L1 + ■ + ● + Select then press ■ + ● + Select.

Unlimited Power Up
Pause the game and access the cheat menu. Now press R2 + L1 + ■ + ● + Select, then press L1 + R1 + Select.

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or Monster Cable, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant.

Armored Core 2

First person view
While playing the game, press and hold ▲, ■, Start. This will pause the game. Press Start to resume playing the game with the new camera view.

Fixed camera view
While playing the game, press and hold ●, ✕, Start. This will pause the game. Press Start to resume playing the game with the camera fixed at the pre-location.

Return to default view
To return to the normal view, pause the game, then press Start to continue the game.

Ridge Racer 5

Third person view onscreen display
While racing in the third person perspective, If you press and hold Select it will display onscreen information that includes the amount of pressure being used on various controller buttons.

Duel mode
To open the Duel mode finish first in lap and overall time in the Standard Time Attack GP.

50's Super Drift Caddy
In the Danver Spectra race, finish first, to unlock the 50's Super Drift Caddy car in free run, time attack, and duel mode.

Devil Drift
In the Rivelta Crinale race, finish in first to unlock the Devil Drift car in free run, time attack, and duel mode.

VW Beetle
In the Solort Rumer race, finish in first to unlock the new style VW Beetle car in free run, time attack, and duel mode.

McLaren F1 clone
In the Kamata Angelus race, finish in first to unlock the McLaren F1 clone in free run, time attack, and duel mode.

99 lap mode
Top open the 99 lap mode, get the top score in each race of the Time Attack GP in Extra Mode, finishing in first place.

Pac-Man mode
Race more than 3,000 kilometers in total distance raced to unlock a red roadster with a Pac-Man driver. Ghosts on scooters will race against the Pac-Man car.

Control the introduction sequence
During the introduction sequence, press L1 and R1 to cycle through three different effects for the portion that uses the in-game graphics. For black and white graphics press R1. For graphics that have a yellow tint press R1 a second time. For blur effects press R1 a third time. To cycle through the various effects, press L1.

Street Fighter EX 3

Bonus characters
To unlock one of the hidden characters. Complete original mode with a regular character without continuing. Each time the game is completed another character will be unlocked, in the following order: Sagat, Vega, Garuda, Shadow Geist, Kairi, Pullum, Area, Darun, and Vulcano.

Tekken Tag

Unlock Theater mode
Complete the game once to unlock Theater mode.

Play as Doctor Boskonovitch
To play as Dr. Boskonovitch get the top score in Tekken Bowl mode.

Access Gallery mode
Unlock Devil to access Gallery mode.

Access Tekken Bowl mode
Unlock Ogre to access Tekken Bowl mode.

Bonus characters
To unlock hidden characters successfully complete arcade mode with any character to unlock one of the hidden characters. Each time the gaem in completed another character will be unlocked.

Dead or Alive 2

Bounce Trick
In the options menu, sub-menu other, the age you enter determines how bouncy the gals are.

Gradius 3 and 4

In Game Reset
Press: L1 + R1 + Start + Select at the same time to reset the game.

Sky Surfer

Scorpion
●, ▲, ✕

Rolling Barrel Left
✕, ●, ●, ✕

Rolling Barrel Right
✕, ■, ■, ✕

Menhouse Surprise
■, ▲, ✕

The Plate
▲, ✕, ▲, ✕

Tidy Bowel In The Hole
■, ✕, ●, ✕

Bending Reed
▲, ■, ✕, ●

PropellerSquare.
▲, ✕, ●

Opening Touring Car
■, ■, ■, ●

Free Fall
▲, ✕, ✕, ▲

Burner Speed
●, ●, ●, ■

Snow Ball
▲, ■, ■, ●

Avalanche
▲, ●, ●, ■

Action Bass

Superbig Fish
Pause the game, then press and hold Select than press L2, R2, R1 and ←.

MTV: Snowboarding

Unlock Tsering
Score 8,000 points in the Alaska Challenge Level to unlock Tsering.

Alaska Challenge Level
Finish in first place after qualifying in the MTV Challenge.

PS Underground V4 12

Unlock Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty trailer
Go to the Security Code screen and enter in the following code.
L1, L2, ✕, R2, R1, ▲, ●, ■.

Street Sk8er 2

Open All courses
←, →, ←, →, ●, ●, R1, ■.

Get All boards
●, ●, ■, ●, ■, ■, ●, R1.

Open All characters
←, ←, ●, ●, L2, ■, →, R2.

Maximum Attributes
L1, ■, ←, ←, R2, ←, R1, ←.

Hogs Of War

Team Lard

1011011011101101 10 1000110100011010011

Enter MARDY PIGS as a name.
Bonus FMV sequence
Enter WATTA PORK as a name.
View FMV sequences
Enter PRYING PIGS as a name.

NCAA Football 2001

Enter these codes at the Enter Secrets Code screen..
Maximum recruiting points
HEADCOACH
All stadiums unlocked
OPENSESAME
Juggernaut team
BULLDOZER
Maximum attribute points
BALLER
Receivers always catch
HANDSOFGLUE
Defense always intercepts
OSKIE
View CPU plays
MINDREADER
Faster daytime effects
DAYNIGHT
Change the date
Y2K
Wind at maximum
SAFETY
Touchdown celebrations
Hold any of the following buttons right after scoring a touchdown.
Ball spike
Press and Hold ◎.
Muscle flexing
Press and Hold ▣.
Back flip
Press and Hold △.
Heismen pose
Press and Hold ✕.
Spin the ball
Press and Hold R1.

X-Men Mutant Academy

Unlock Everything
Enter this code at the main menu or the character selection screen, press Select, ↑, L2, R1, L1, R2. You will hear a sound if entered correctly.
Play as Toad
Complete arcade mode once with any character to unlock Toad.
Play as Mystique
Complete arcade mode twice with any character to unlock Mystique.
Play as Sabretooth
Complete arcade mode three times with any character to unlock Sabretooth.
Play as Magneto
Complete arcade mode four times with any character to unlock Magneto.
Movie costumes
Press ▣ when selecting your fighter to fight in their costume from the live-action X-Men movie.
Behind the scenes pictures
Complete arcade mode with all the characters in their movie costume to unlock behind the scenes pictures in cerebro mode.
Historical comic pictures
Complete arcade mode with all the characters in their regular costume to unlock their historical comic picture in cerebro mode.
Bonus costumes
Graduate the Academy with straight A's with any character to unlock their third costume. Press ◎ to select the third costume.
Character comic pictures
Complete ten rounds with any of the characters in their regular costume in survival mode to unlock their comic picture in cerebro mode.
Lock Movies, Bosses, and Survival Pictures 1 and 2
Enter this code at the main menu or the character selection screen, press and hold Select + Start. If entered correctly the game will return to the main menu.
Character movie pictures
Complete twenty rounds with any of the characters in their movie costume in survival mode to unlock their movie pictures in cerebro mode.
Movie pictures
Complete twenty rounds with Gambit in survival mode to unlock movie pictures in cerebro mode.
Character intro FMV sequence
Complete arcade mode with any of the characters to unlock their intro FMV sequence in cerebro mode.
Outro FMV sequence
Graduate the Academy with any of the characters to unlock their outro FMV sequence in cerebro mode.

NGEN Racing

Unlock All tracks and jets
Enter this code at the main menu, press R1, L1, R1, R2, L2, R2, L2, L1 to unlock all tracks and jets in arcade mode.
400 million credits
Enter this code at the main menu, press R2, L2, R2, L1, R2, R1, R2, L1.
Bonus jets
Enter this code at the main menu, press R1, R2, L1, L2, L2, L1, R2, R1 to unlock more jets in NGEN mode. Successfully complete both circuits of any type in first place to unlock a secret jet bike.

Eagle One: Harrier Attack

Level select
Go to the options screen and press R1, L1, R2, L2, Start.
Invincibility
Go to the options screen and press R1, L1, R2, L2, L1.
Infinite ammunition
Go to the options screen and press R1, L1, R2, L2, R1.

Gekido

Level skip
While playing a game, press and hold Start + Select in urban fighters mode to skip a level.
Unlock Kobuchi
Complete urban fighters mode with Tetsuo and Ushi to unlock Kobuchi in all modes.
Unlock Kintaro
Complete urban fighters mode with Gorilla to unlock Kintaro in arena battle mode.
Unlock Angela
Complete urban fighters mode with Kobuchi to unlock Angela in arena battle mode.
Unlock Gorilla
Complete urban fighters mode with Travis and Michelle to play as Gorilla.
Unlock as Akujin
Complete urban fighters mode on the hard difficulty setting to unlock Akujin in all modes.
Alternate costumes
Complete urban fighters mode on the normal difficulty setting three times. Then, press and hold L1, L2, R1, or R2 while selecting a character at the character selection screen.
Hard mode
Complete urban fighters mode with all the characters on the normal difficulty setting to unlock the hard difficulty setting.
Survival mode
Complete urban fighters mode twice to open survival mode.
Team battle mode
Complete urban fighters mode three times to unlock team battle mode.
Shadow fighter mode
Complete urban fighters mode once to open Shadow Fighter mode.
Street gang battle mode
Complete urban fighters mode on the hard difficulty setting with Angela, Kintaro, or Akujin.
Deform mode
Enter DEFORMANIA as a name at the hi-score screen, to unlock deform mode under the options screen.
Skeleton mode
Enter BONECRACK as a name at the hi-score screen to unlock skeleton mode under the options screen.

Chan Stuntmaster

All Dragons
Enter this code at the Press Start Button screen, press L1, R2, L2, ▣, ✕, ✕. You will hear a sound if you entered the code correctly.
Level select
Enter this code at the Press Start Button screen, press L2, ▣, △, ◎, ✕, R2, R2. You will hear a sound if you entered the code correctly.
Movie theater option
Enter this code at the Press Start Button screen, press ←, →, R1, ◎, ▣, △, △. You will hear a sound if you entered the code correctly.

Who wants to be a Millonaire?

Wannabe name
Enter MILLIONIARE as a name and Regis Philbin will change the name to Wannabe.
Imposter
Enter DAN BLONSKY as a name and you will be renamed as or PHONEY, FIBBER or IMPOSTER.

Tomba 2

Cheat mode
At the main menu, press and hold L1 + R1 and then press ◎, △, ▣, ✕. You will hear a sound if you entered the code correctly

Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn

Infinite ammunition
Pause the game and press L1, L2, R1, R2, ▣, ✕, ✕.

Sammy Sosa Softball Slam

Ball Cannon
Pause the game,then press L1, L2, L1, L2, L1, L2, If entered correctly will here someone say "throw 'em a tater".
Big Ball
Pause the game, then press R1, R2, R1, R2, R1, R2.

Digimon World

Get All the DigiMon
To Get all the DigiMon, At the Start Menu press △ + Start + ◎ + Select .

Bubble Bobble 2

Skip Level
Press L1, L2, R1 and R2 at the same time to skip levels.

MLB 2001

Hit home runs every time
When the batter steps into the box, Press ✕, △, ◎, ✕, ✕, ✕.

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PERIPHERALS

It's a simple rule of the gaming universe that not all PlayStation peripherals are created equal. Smart players know that there's a wide range of quality, features and performance that should be taken into consideration when making a decision about which peripherals are worth your hard-earned bucks.

This month, we tested a quartet of cool-looking controllers to see if their performance lives up to their sleek, high-tech appearances. The results of this research were a little surprising, as several of the controllers failed to meet our high expectations, proving that looks aren't everything. No amount of slick styling or attractive packaging can compensate for poor responsiveness, an awkward control layout or other significant flaws. So, read on to see whether any of these peripherals might be right for you.

Pro Shock Lite

Manufacturer: Blaze
MSRP: $24.99

The sleek and shiny Pro Shock Lite is the attractive younger sibling of Blaze's Pro Shock joystick, offering a miniaturized version of that arcade-style controller, complete with vibration effects. Both are solid and nicely built, with enormous action buttons that are easy to press and very responsive.

The Pro Shock Lite features an eight-way joystick similar to what you might find in an arcade, with a noticeably stiff and "clicky" feel to it. Although the control is fairly crisp and predictable, the joystick is really best suited only to certain kinds of games, such as Pong, Pac-Man World and other arcade-like titles.

In addition to its eight large action buttons, there are also buttons dedicated to turbo fire and slow motion. Unfortunately, while the start button is a pretty decent size, some of these other buttons are much smaller by comparison. For instance, the select button and the slow-motion button are each half the size and far too close together, while the turbo button is also tinier than most players would like.

The controller is small enough to hold in your hands or place on your lap, but it also has textured rubber pads on the bottom if you want to place it on a table. Despite this, the Pro Shock Lite simply isn't versatile enough to justify a Gold rating, but players seeking authentic arcade action in a portable package may want to give it a try.

Palm Pad Junior

Manufacturer: Blaze
MSRP: $24.99

There's an old saying that "good things come in small packages," but the Palm Pad Junior seems to be an unfortunate exception to this time-honored adage. Although its silvery spaceship looks are extremely intriguing, its compact design is really only suitable for small-fingered children.

From the moment you pick it up, the controller feels light, flimsy and entirely unsubstantial, like it is made out of cheap plastic. The unusually designed "microswitched D-pad" is especially guilty of this. It feels far too stiff, and is not particularly easy to play with. In addition, the start and select buttons are extremely small and way too close together, and the L2 and R2 buttons are in a strange place underneath the controller, where they can easily be pressed accidentally.

The bottom line is, adult gamers should skip the Palm Pad Junior for a more appropriate controller, and children may want to think twice before buying. With an average design and awkward controls, there's little to recommend this device besides its sharp looks.

Performance Dual Impact 2

Manufacturer: Interact
MSRP: $24.99

Dressed in black and shaped a lot like a Batarang, InterAct's new controller for both the PlayStation and PS2 proved to be a worthy alternative to Sony's Dual Shock and Dual Shock2. With its handsome looks, superb design and excellent performance, the Dual Impact 2 is a pretty impressive piece of equipment that would surely make Batman proud.

For starters, the controller's uniquely contoured layout makes it very comfortable in your hands, and the entire unit has a high-quality feel. The smartly designed D-pad is extremely easy on your thumb, as are the rubber-coated analog sticks, which even have a thoughtful little indentation on the top. The analog sticks aren't quite as stiff as the Dual Shock2, but they are very responsive, so that really isn't an issue.

In addition, the action buttons are large, firm and also very responsive, and the nicely angled shoulder buttons are solid and virtually rattle-free. InterAct deserves special kudos for the large and easily accessible select and start buttons, which are the only part of the controller done in PS2-blue.

If there is any downside at all to the Dual Impact 2, it is only because the vibration effects feel slightly subdued at times. But otherwise, the feedback is pretty good and the controller handles with laudable precision. It's not quite up to Platinum status, but it is certainly worthy of serious consideration.

Racing Wheel

Manufacturer: Mad Catz
MSRP: $34.99

Speaking of cool-looking controllers, the Mad Catz Racing Wheel really takes the cake in the appearance department. Its unusual design and attractive styling are completely unique — but alas, this promising peripheral proved to be a little too different for its own good.

The Racing Wheel feels well-made, and the comfortable contoured grip fits adult-size hands quite nicely, but it may be too large for children. The unit features three play modes — analog, steering wheel/NeGcon, and digital — as well as programmable buttons that let you change the control layout. However, even with this feature the controller takes a lot of getting used to, and a few of the buttons can be hard to find at first, such as the well-hidden triangle button on the inside of the handle.

Another flaw is that some of the buttons are simply too small and close together, such as the L1 and R1 buttons. Plus, the rather unusual layout makes it easy to hit buttons accidentally, since several are positioned near your fingers on the handle.

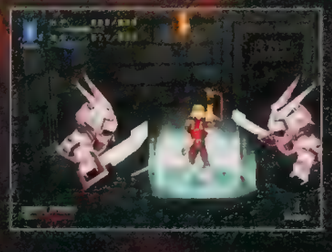
The miniature steering wheel is mounted on the right side, so it feels strange turning it towards you to go left, and away from you to go right. Using the trigger mechanism to accelerate also takes some getting used to, but otherwise the controls are smooth and responsive.

If only its design was a little more intuitive and user-friendly, this unique peripheral might have earned a Gold rating. Still, a strong Silver makes it worth considering — but serious racing fans may want to check out the even better Mad Catz MC2 racing wheel, which was reviewed last issue.

(If you have questions about the products tested, or your company would like to submit products for review, send an e-mail to ubergamer@aol.com)

YOU DEFEND YOUR FAMILY.
YOU DEFEND YOUR HOMELAND.
YOU DEFEND ALL THAT IS GOOD.

BUT FIRST, YOU MUST DEFEND YOURSELF.



DRAGON VALOR

You are the very first dragon slayer, a fearless hero who must combat the most horrific of enemies. You will vanquish evil, marry the heroine, and continue your heroic legacy with each new generation. You will fight as 4 brave characters in 3 action-packed storylines, and battle to prove your worth, your might, your Dragon Valor.

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www.namco.com

Summoner

Publisher	THQ
Developer	Volition
Genre	Oct. 26, 00
Release Date	DVD

PS2

Developing a game for a new piece of hardware and then delivering it for the system's launch is a daunting task in itself. In between coming to grips with the new technology, making a succession of tight deadlines and delivering a quality product, there is quite a lot of potential for things to go wrong. Now, add in the factor that you want to produce a full-fledged RPG — and an original, American-developed one at that — and the added amount of stress and pressure must be overwhelming. This is the intimidating task Volition and THQ have decided to take on with Summoner and, by the look of things, they are in the process of pulling it off. With only two months left to go before the PlayStation2 officially hits retail shelves, this talented team of designers, programmers and artists (whose pedigree includes some of the Descent series on PC) are quickly and concisively putting all of the pieces of this epic role playing game together.

The Greatest RPG Ever!

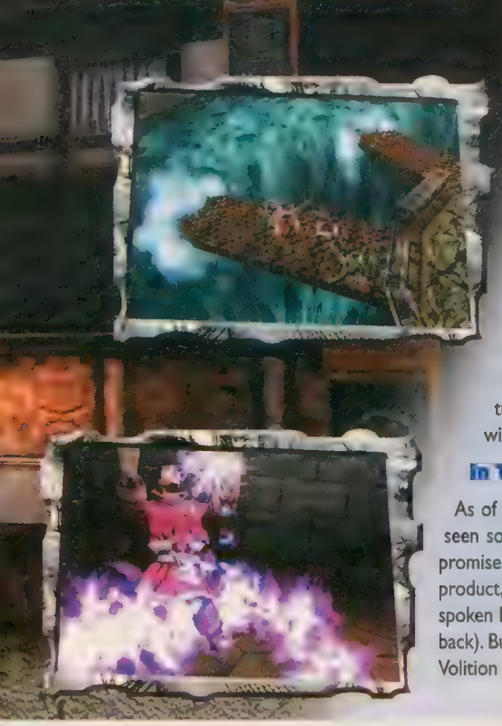
While many hardcore gamers will automatically (and ignorantly) denounce any RPG developed outside of Japan, Volition is confident that they are in the process of creating the best role player ever. This statement was actually made by Summoner's lead designer months back at its official unveiling, and I'll admit that even I was skeptical as to whether they could back up such a claim. Since then, I've seen Summoner in its many stages of development, and it has developed and transformed from a rough concept to a shiny, high-resolution next-generation contender. While it still remains to be seen if all of the die hard RPG gamers who live and breathe Japanese-produced games such as Final Fantasy, Wild Arms, Dragon Quest, etc., will either embrace or turn their backs on Summoner, one can't ignore the fact that this game has the all of the trappings of a great role playing experience.

Summoning — A Curse or Blessing?

The story of the game revolves around an outcast named Joseph who has a rare and magical power — he is a Summoner. With rings of channeling, Summoners have the power to call forth demons, golems, supernatural servants and elemental creatures. Over the centuries, Summoners have toppled empires and challenged gods, they have been venerated as saviors and feared as destroyers. The chosen are born with a mark on one hand, but the origins of this gift were forgotten long ago. Joseph fears his power more than death itself. As a child, Joseph tried to save his village from an evil army of attackers, but the demon he accidently summoned turned on the villagers while he watched in horror — his misguided heroics causing the deaths of those he loved. Exiled and ostracized, Joseph vowed never to summon again. Eventually finding himself in the small farming settlement of Masad, Joseph encountered an enigmatic and wise old man by the name of Yago. Yago gave Joseph shelter while training and guiding him toward fulfilling his prophecy. As the invading armies of Orenia (the same attackers who laid waste to his village) march across the Medevan plain, Yago urges Joseph to quest for the ancient rings... Reluctantly, he agrees.

Summoner 101

If you ask any role playing gamer what are the most important aspects of a great RPG, there is a clear division among story, the battle system and graphics. Thankfully, Summoner promises to deliver on all accounts. As a next-generation RPG, Volition has attempted to throw in everything but the kitchen sink. Since you already know the storyline, we'll focus the rest of this feature on how the game looks and plays. For starters, the graphic engine in Summoner has gone through many tweaks and changes since it was first imagined. Originally slated solely for the PC (it's now being developed for PC, Mac and PS2), many changes had to be made to configure it for Sony's super console. The biggest transformation so far has been the resolution, which went from



a jaggy, medium resolution mode to the much-more eye-pleasingly smooth and shiny high-resolution of 640 x 440. This alone has made a world of difference, as the game now looks like a true next generation product. The team at Volition has also solved the oft-mentioned FSAA (Full Scene Anti-Aliasing) problem that most developers have been grappling, by using a field-blending method which just about eliminates the nasty interlace flickering and edge aliasing seen on NTSC televisions. The graphic engine also employs mip-mapping, giving everything a smooth, natural look. The only negative about Summoner's graphic engine thus far, is it's inability to produce a constant frame rate of 60 fps. Currently, the game is running at 30, but final optimization has yet to be done and the possibility of bumping the frame rate up still exists. From the screens splashed across these pages, you can see that the game looks brilliant, with amazing attention to detail on the characters and environments. While I can't comment about the game's sound and music (it was not in the version shown to us), Summoner will have a Dolby Surround option and will only use voice for the in-game cut-scenes (dialogue between characters during gameplay will be displayed in text boxes).

Combat — Something Old, Something New

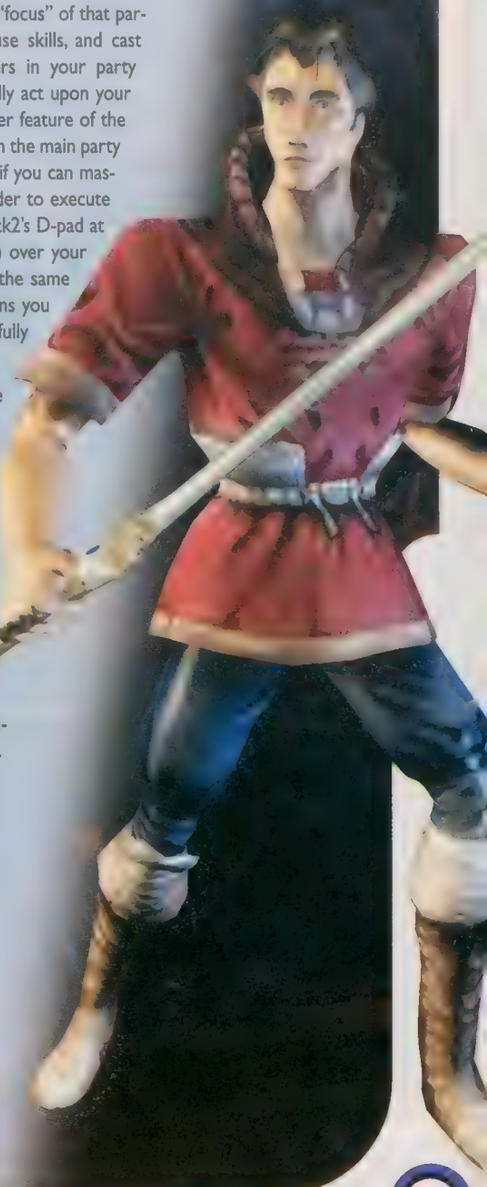
The battle system in Summoner borrows bits and pieces from some of the best RPGs of all time. Combat is real-time based, but can be paused at any time to issue orders to your other party members. During the game, you can switch between any of the characters in your party at the flick of a shoulder button. When you have control or "focus" of that particular character, you can issue combat commands, use skills, and cast spells/summons for that character. The other members in your party (which can be up to four others at any time) will generally act upon your last orders, and be handled by the game engine's AI. Another feature of the battle system is the ability to "chain" attacks. Each character in the main party has up to four special attacks which can be chained together if you can master the timing (similar to that of Square's Vagrant Story). In order to execute this, you must press one of the four directions on the Dual Shock2's D-pad at the precise moment. A visual clue will appear (as an infinity sign) over your character's head to aid in the timing. It's not possible to execute the same chain attack twice in a row, but there is no limit to how many chains you can do successively — it just gets more difficult for each one successfully completed.

Besides the battle system, most of the traditional RPG elements can be found in Summoner. The game is non-linear is a sense that there is a multitude of side-quests and challenges you and your party can embark on if you so choose. If not, it's possible to stay focused on your main quest and completely bypass them. Characters have hit points that will increase as they "level up". While there are no random battles, you will be forced to fight if you want your character to grow in strength, skills and abilities. Instead of magic points, each character has a pool of ability points, which recharge over a period of time. Ability Points are used for skills such as picking locks, sneaking, stealing, etc., as well as spell casting and Joseph's unique Summoning ability.

Speaking of Summoning, only Joseph will have this ability. As you progress through the game, Joseph will find ancient rings that can harness the Summoning ability. Each of these rings has a specific property (Darkness, Flame, Light, etc.) and, when used by themselves, or in combinations, they have the possibility of summoning a creature to Joseph's side. The creatures Joseph can create range from Red Minotaurs and Black Imps to Stone Golems and Living Swords. Some of the creatures Joseph can summon will be unexpected and even dangerous to you and your party. When you do summon a creature, it will stay in your party for as long as it is healthy. During this duration, as Joseph you will share hit points with the creature, leaving you vulnerable to attack. If your summon is killed in combat, the hit points it loses will not be returned to you.

In The End...

As of press time, Summoner is still in the process of coming together. The bits and pieces we've seen so far look absolutely amazing. The gameplay also has plenty of potential, with a quest that promises to give even the most seasoned adventurer a run for their money. As an American-made product, there is no arguing that THQ has a long road to hoe with the always-passionate and outspoken RPG gamers (poor Mark A. still hasn't come out of hiding after his Hot Topic a few issues back). But, both as a launch title and as a quality RPG experience, we're confident that THQ and Volition will deliver the goods.



WITH BRIAN FARRELL, CEO OF THQ

As part of PSE2's inaugural cover feature, we sat down with THQ's President and CEO, Brian Farrell, to discuss THQ and its vision of the near future. The Calabasas, CA-based software publisher has become well-known for its WWF titles and for carving a niche among a competitive landscape that is populated by bigger software houses. We focused our discussions on PS2, as that is the subject most near and dear to our hearts. Here's what Mr. Farrell had to offer...

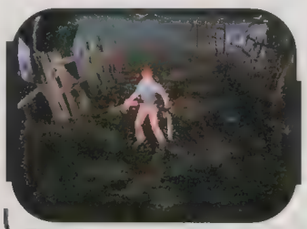
PSE2: Can you give us a bit of your personal employment background and a brief history of THQ?

Brian Farrell: I first joined THQ is 1991 as CFO and in 1995 the board voted me into my current position of president and CEO. THQ was actually founded in 1990, the year before I came to the company. At that time our product line included both interactive toys and software. Since then, we have made the move to strictly software and have experienced tremendous growth. We are very pleased to have maintained our position as the number two third-party publisher for the past eighteen months and are looking forward to continued growth through 2000 and beyond, with both licensed games like our popular WWF franchise and original content like Summoner for PlayStation2 — our first release for the new platform.

PSE2: Can you outline your platform strategy for us, over the next couple of years?

BF: We have fared previous platform transitions well and are more confident than ever before as we enter the 2000 holiday selling season. We plan on leveraging our extensive kids' line-up, including

EVIL DEAD



EVIL DEAD

Rugrats, Scooby-Doo and Power Rangers, on the PlayStation and Nintendo 64 system, and will bring even more popular kids' brands to the Game Boy Color system. We'll be among the first publishers on a brand new hardware system for the first time with Summoner for PlayStation 2 this October.

Looking ahead, we're planning on a minimum of ten PlayStation2 titles through 2001 including Red Faction, Pure Ride and Championship Motocross — expect even more in 2002. We have been working with Microsoft and Nintendo and intend to be there at launch for both X-Box and Dolphin. Our PC presence will stay about the same in terms of number of products, but we're looking at increased units as we enter new genres with some pretty innovative gameplay. We intend to maintain our leadership role in the handheld arena with the emergence of Game Boy Advance.

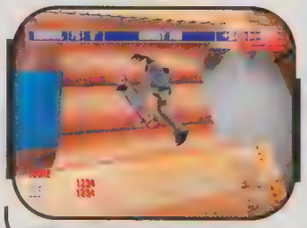
PSE2: What kind of ownership duplication do you see between PS2, X-Box, Dolphin and Dreamcast?

BF: History proves that early adopters do buy multiple platforms, but it's still hard to judge where the duplication will be this time. It appears that Microsoft and Sony are going after a similar consumer with the home entertainment center position and Nintendo has always catered to a different, slightly younger consumer.

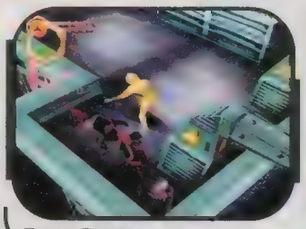
PSE2: How many sku's are THQ looking to ship in your current fiscal year, and what titles do you consider to be your flag-bearers?

BF: We're looking at our biggest year ever with more than 50 separate sku's for fiscal year 2000. As I stated before, we are feeling very well equipped for this transition year. This year is particularly exciting for us as we launch brand new licensed franchises and original brands for THQ like Scooby-Doo, Summoner, Power Rangers and Evil Dead. As always, gamers can count on more innovative WWF wrestling games.

MTV SPORTS PURE RIDE



MTV SPORTS SKATEBOARDING



POWER RANGERS

WWF SMACKDOWN: KNOW YOUR ROLE!

WWF SMACKDOWN: KNOW YOUR ROLE!

WWF SMACKDOWN: KNOW YOUR ROLE!

PSE2: What is the current balance of internally developed games vs. those developed by 3rd party contractors?

BF: We're at about 15% internally developed this year, up from 10% last year. We'll likely see that number grow to between 30-40% next year with more releases from our internal studios, like Heavy Iron Studios and Pacific Coast Power & Light.

PSE2: What do you believe to be the critical issues facing small to medium-sized publishers, as the industry moves through this hardware transition period?

BF: The four primary issues any size publisher is faced with include: 1.) Finding the right content, as we have done with strong licenses like WWF and Rugrats, as well as original properties like Summoner and our Motocross franchise. 2.) Technology is always a challenge — publishers need strong development partners. Games like our new first person shooter, Red Faction, which will break new ground, both literally and figuratively, in the FPS genre. 3.) A solid marketing, sales and distribution force. 4.) A proven management team — our core management team has been in place through our past few years of rapid growth and is committed to the future of THQ.

PSE2: With PS2 shipping sans internal internet/Broadband solution, how significant do you think the on-line aspect of gaming will be on PS2? As an add-on, do you commit development dollars to a peripheral that will possibly reach less than 10% of the installed base? Or, do you look for "quick-fix" solutions and treat it as a PS3 issue?

DANGER GIRL

DANGER GIRL

BF: We are investing a lot of time, money and energy into our broadband strategy and believe that it will still take some time for broadband to evolve. It appears that Sony has a similar mindset right now. The PlayStation2 is a very powerful machine and we think that their strategy of keeping the price point down for launch was important. We think the peripheral could work well for us.

PSE2: What are your goals for THQ over the next few years?

BF: As I've stated before, we are #2 only behind EA. We actually gained market share through the first half of 2000, when many publishers lost. While we are pleased with this position, we would like to continue to grow our market share through establishing more, even stronger franchises, both based on licenses and original content. Our internal growth goal is to double in revenue every three to five years.

PSE2: Looking into your crystal ball for a bit; Who do you see as the market leaders, looking specifically at hardware installed base(s), in 2005? Or, in terms that are probably a little more near and dear to the hearts of all at THQ, who's going to put the SmackDown on the other guys?

BF: The big win would be a combined installed base of 200 million across Nintendo, Microsoft and Sony in 2005 but history would dictate that there isn't room at the top for three. As software publishers, we root for all of them.

On a typical day the US Customs service seizes:

- arms and ammunition worth over $24,000
- illegal substances worth over $4 million.

But nevertheless, in 1999 illegal substances with an estimated value of $40 billion entered the country across the US/Mexican border alone...

DELIVER AT ALL COSTS.

SMUGGLER'S RUN

PlayStation 2

RELEASE DATE: PLAYSTATION 2 LAUNCH

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/SMUGGLERSRUN

SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON GUIDANCE RECORDINGS

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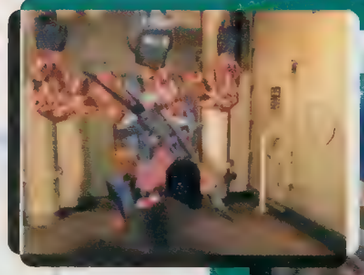
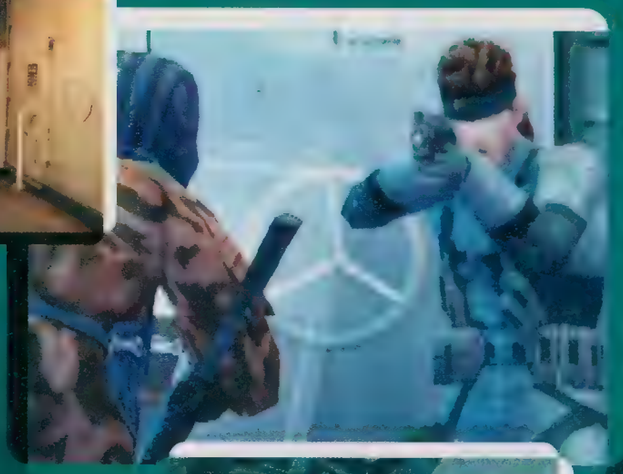
This title is not yet approved by Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Genre Action
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami
Release Date May

Metal Gear Solid 2:

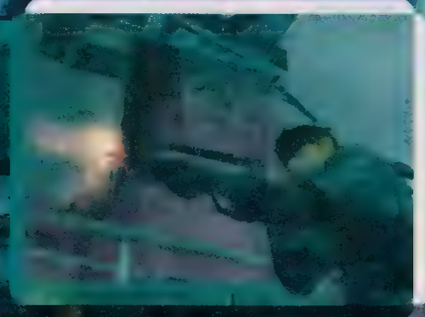
Sons of Liberty





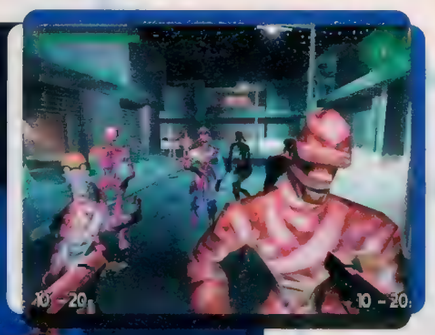
Okay, we have shown Konami's Metal Gear 2 in just about every issue of PSExtreme since it was revealed at this year's E3 in May, but how could we not kick off the first issue of PSE2 with another look? The shots shown here are from the recently released Japanese DVD teaser that hit their store shelves in July. On the DVD are both English and Japanese-dubbed versions of the five minute long movie, as well as some other MGS-related tidbits and goodies, including some of the free swag that was given away at the unveiling, as well as a few digitized pieces of stylized artwork.

The debate continues whether or not the images and footage on screen were from actual gameplay or just cleverly edited bits from non-interactive CG, but we are very confident that the majority was recorded from the in-game engine. In the trailer, we are given a glimpse of some of the returning cast — Snake (of course), Otacon and Revolver Ocelot, to name a few, as well as some interesting newcomers, like the tough and mysterious knife-wielding woman and the menacing, Godzilla-like Metal Gear Rex. We can also see some of the potential new game mechanics, such as the ability to create diversions by tossing objects down a flight of stairs or hallways (possibly stun bombs), hanging from ledges and platforms to avoid being detected from above, hiding in lockers and other enclosed areas, using gun-mounted flashlights to illuminate your surroundings and surprise enemies, and being able to switch into a first-person perspective on the fly. There will also be some interesting new weapons, including a tranquilizer gun that temporarily knocks out enemies without killing them. It is said that you can go through the whole game using this weapon alone.



Key Features

- DVD format, translating to a huge gaming experience
- A host of new stealth elements
- The ability to switch between first and third person perspectives
- High resolution graphics running 60 frames per second
- Continues the storyline of Solid Snake
- THE big PS2 game for next Spring



Genre First-Person Shooter
Publisher Eidos
Developer Free Radical Design
Release Date Spring

Time Splitters

We were lucky enough to get some hands-on time with Eidos' new FPS, Time Splitters, and are able to bring you the following information on this highly anticipated title.

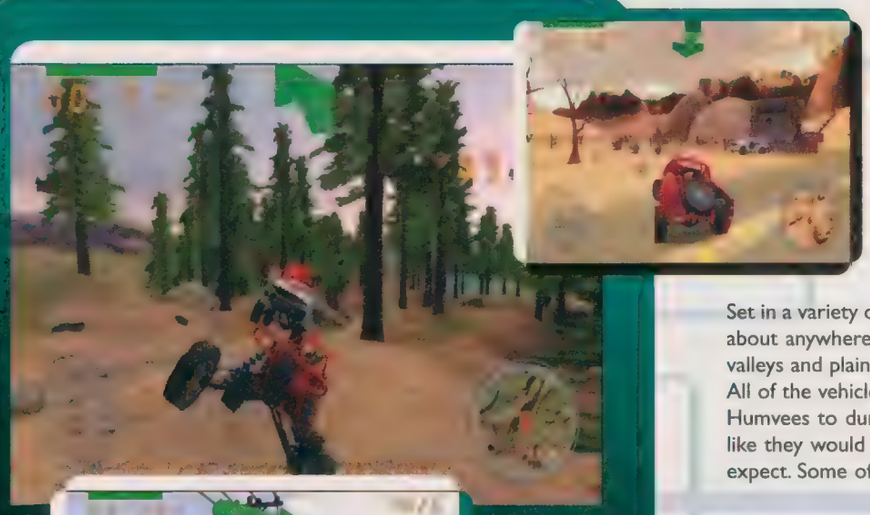
The game will feature both Story and Arcade modes, with the Arcade mode effectively simulating the multiplayer experience by making use of computer AI bots. The Story mode will allow the player to make his way from beginning to end of the levels against a set number of baddies. In the build of the game that we had the opportunity to see, there are nine different time zones (these are all working names): 1935 (Tomb) — set around an Egyptian tomb, 1950 (Village) — a post-war European seaside village, 1965 (Mansion) — a zombie-filled space that is reminiscent of EA's classic 3DO title, "Monster Manor", 1970 (Chinese) — a Nixon-era frag-fest with a side of egg rolls next to the Great Wall, 1985 (Industrial) — a warehouse district that provides a safe haven for any would-be sniper, 2000 (Docks) — a present-day firefight along the waterfront, 2005 (SciFi) — aliens and cyborgs deal out their worst in a decrepit arena set in the near future, 2020 (Planet) — the action gets even more intense on this barren, alien-inhabited planet, and 2035 (Launch) — this futuristic spaceport looks to be the setting for Story mode's final battle, and it is VERY cool-looking.

Another interesting feature in the game is that you have a choice between male and female characters (and, at times, aliens and cyborgs) in each of the nine time zones, and each pair is different for each time zone.

The game, at this stage, plays as a very straight-forward FPS — more akin to a "Doom", vs. a Goldeneye. There are a large number of enemies in each level and enough action to blister both hands.

Key Features

- Complete level editor/designer
- Up to 100 user-created levels saved to a memory card
- 1-4 player, split-screen action
- 60 Frames Per Second, FPS gameplay
- Former Goldeneye team members working on design
- Wide variety of weapons (Sniper Rifle, Chain Gun, etc.)
- Both Story and Arcade play modes
- Play as 18+ different characters



SMUGGLER'S RUN

Smuggler's Run puts the player in the role of a driver for hire. The object behind the game is to deliver "questionable" goods across county lines... no questions asked. Of course, the local law won't take lightly to your illegal actions and will, most assuredly, join in pursuit. In addition to law enforcement, rival bands of smugglers and the terrain itself will make your life challenging to say the least. Just crossing the landscape requires you to develop various skills for controlling slides on slippery sand and ice, crossing rivers and surviving collisions, and jumping fallen trees and other obstacles.

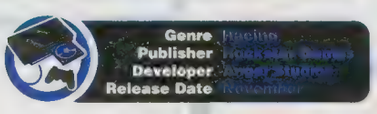
Set in a variety of rural environments, the game's 3D graphic engine will allow the player to drive just about anywhere. The environments in which you drive include wide-open fields, dense forests, hilly valleys and plains, swamp-filled jungles, roaring rivers, and mountain ranges.

All of the vehicles in the game (which range in variety from four-wheeling pick-up trucks to military Humvees to dune buggies) feature four-point suspension systems. This means they will behave just like they would in real life — you will feel every bump, jump, ditch and hill just the way you would expect. Some of the other features in Smuggler's Run include night driving, weather effects, tons of special effects (vehicle damage, particle-based sand, dirt, and smoke), in-game cut scenes, interactive objects (rocks, trees, brick walls, etc.), a two-player multi-player mode, and advanced AI that allows for CPU-controlled vehicles to run as decoys or chase your opponents.

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Rockstar Games
Developer	Angel Studios
Release Date	November

KEY FEATURES

- 1-2 players via split-screen
- Off-road, go-anywhere racing
- Night driving and weather effects
- All vehicles feature 4-pt. suspensions
- Impressive draw distance in levels
- Interactive objects that can be destroyed
- The ability to drive as far as the eye can see



Genre	Racing
Publisher	Rockstar Games
Developer	Angel Studios
Release Date	November

MIDNIGHT CLUB: STREET RACING

Midnight Club: Street Racing is a game based around illegal street racing. Set against a backdrop of two ultra-detailed, accurately mapped and rendered 3D cities (New York and London), players will pit their driving skills against others in an effort to become a member of the elusive Midnight Club. You will begin the game as a lowly taxi driver. Looking to improve your good standing (not to mention your financial status) by joining the ranks of the Midnight Club, you take to the streets with your shabby vehicle and challenge other members to white knuckle races at break-neck speeds. As you amass your winnings (and their pink-slips), you will be able to use your new rides to challenge better drivers for their position and title status in the Club.

As you can see from the screens, Midnight Club offers up detailed and realistic 3D city maps, that are said to be fully recreated down to the most minute details. Expect all of the major landmarks to be represented (from the Empire State Building in New York, to Picadilly Circus in London), as well as every part of big city life you would expect from a crowded metropolis. Each city will be packed with traffic, pedestrians, police (that behave as they would in real-life) and roadside objects, such as trash dumpsters, hot dog carts, street lights, mail boxes, etc.

KEY FEATURES

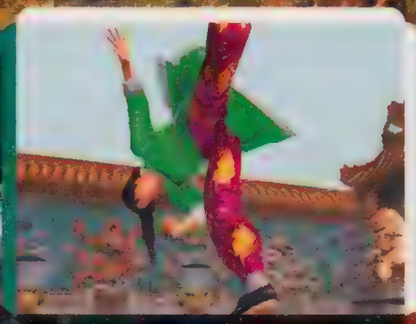
- Go-anywhere gameplay
- Accurately mapped 3D cities: New York and London
- Variety of different vehicles
- Ability to upgrade and repair vehicles
- Working traffic lights, random traffic and pedestrians
- Many secret paths and shortcuts
- Designed by developers of "Midtown Madness"

Genre Fighting
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco
Release Date October

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

It should come as no surprise that Tekken Tag Tournament will hit the shelves on PS2's opening day. It first appeared as a tech demo way back when — and damn, did it look good. And, while the game may not look as convincingly realistic as it did back then, it still manages to impress. Its release is imminent and that's a good thing for anyone who has been patient enough to wait for the US launch. For the most part, gameplay remains untouched with a few tweaks here and there. Although TTT plays just like its arcade cousin, it looks like a million dollars (almost what I paid for my Metal Gear Solid DVD — sigh). The difference is like night and day — a few thousand extra polys per fighter go a long, long way. Jin Kazama is ripped; his highly defined back muscles are visible during battle, not just the intro. And wait 'til you get a load of Nina. It's not just the fighters that see new enhancements, backgrounds receive nearly as much master detail. Yoshi's winter forest set is stunning, with snowflakes falling in a seemingly random manner; the snow covered ground has a convincing effect — it appears bumpy. Eddie's grassy field is also quite impressive, with cheering onlookers. Visual effects like hit animations light up the screen as brilliant as Disneyland's nightly pyrotechnics show.

In Namco tradition, Tekken Tag Tournament is full of goodies to keep rabid (not avid) fans happy. Tekken Bowl, as crazy as it may sound, is a lot of fun. Just imagine the entire Tekken cast out hitting the local alley on a Saturday night. Each fighter has his or her own skill set which makes for really interesting matches. It's like reliving League Bowling on the Neo Geo. Juke Box mode permits you to choose the tuneage, but only after scoring 200 in Tekken Bowl. With our luck, maybe Namco will throw in another few bonus treats (I still haven't seen Pac-Man in Tekken) but, if not, TTT is still as sweet as a TT... Audi, that is.



KEY FEATURES

- Full Tekken, Tekken 2, Tekken 3 character roster
- Re-done 3D environments
- New introductory cut-scenes
- Remixed soundtrack
- Tag Team and Single character modes
- 1 to 4 player Pair Play Mode with PS2 Multi-Tap
- Tekken Bowl Mode
- Nina Williams (smile)

Genre Racing
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco
Release Date September

RIDGE RACER V

When the PlayStation launched in 1995, there is no question that Ridge Racer was the must-have reason for buying the system. Most of the other titles that were available at launch were lackluster and typical of most day 1 games. But, Ridge Racer — this was the game that proved the PlayStation technology. Well, here we are, five years later, and Ridge Racer 5 is set to blow away new PS2 owners all over again. While the gameplay and tracks will be very familiar to RR aficionados, the beautiful, fast 3D engine is all-new and all PS2! We have logged many hours playing this one and think you will have a lot to look forward to. Players will find brilliantly lit, detailed courses, featuring day, twilight and night driving, fantastic special FX, up to 13 other drivers on the track, and computer controlled drivers that are smart and aggressive, and a dynamic physics model that has the cars handling as true to life as they are graphically impressive. In addition, players will have the ability to go head-to-head, via the game's split-screen, in a two player contest. With a large variety of great looking cars that you can acquire, excellent graphics and sound and that 'drift' style gameplay that we have all come to know and love, RR5 is sure to be on the top of many PS2 owners' shopping lists.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-2 player, split/screen racing
- Excellent instant replay feature
- Soundtrack features great variety of musical styles
- Fantastic car models
- Grand Prix, Practice and Time Attack Modes
- Ability to customize vehicles
- Fast, 60 Frames Per Second gameplay

before victory comes humility

Look within. Find that part of you which knows no surrender. Because Namco has issued the greatest challenges for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system. Whether it's the furious Tekken Tag Tournament, the flat-out Ridge Racer V, or the heart-pounding MotoGP, victory won't come easily — if at all. But when you finally seize it, you will discover your inner champion.

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

RIDGE RACER V

MOTOGP

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PlayStation.2

PRODUCTS RANGE FROM EVERYONE TO TEEN
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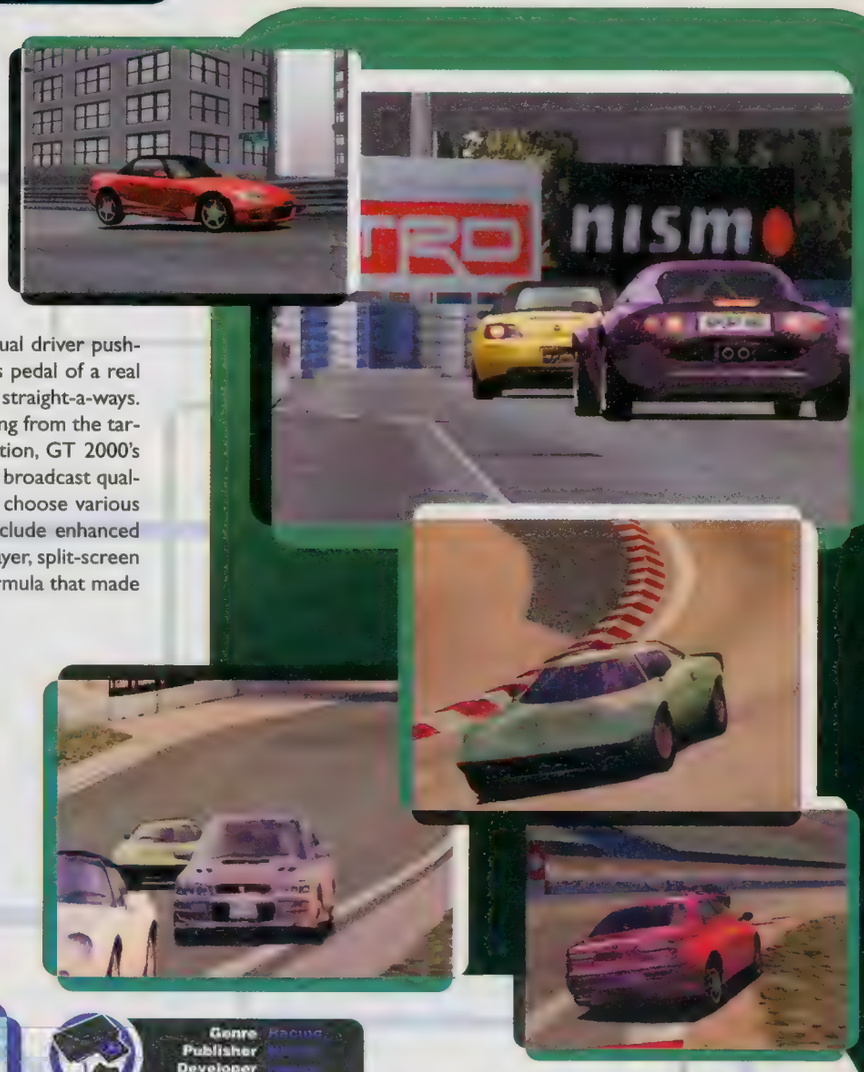
Genre Racing
Publisher SCEA
Developer Polyphony
Release Date January 01

GRAN TURISMO 2000

SCEA and Polyphony hope to raise the bar once again, with the release of Gran Turismo 2000 for PS2. In what promises to be the most realistic interactive racing experience to date, Gran Turismo 2000 delivers speed players can feel. The game takes full advantage of the Dualshock2 analog controller, so that the harder the virtual driver pushes on the pressure-sensitive controller, the faster the car goes — simulating the gas pedal of a real car. Drivers can feel speed as they maneuver through curves and shoot down straight-a-ways. Whether it's the sun's beaming rays off of a windshield, or smoldering heat waves rising from the tarmac, GT 2000 will try to offer the player the complete racing experience. In addition, GT 2000's sophisticated car physics and meticulous environment mapping should help to create broadcast quality graphics that blur the line between game and reality. Players will also be able to choose various weather conditions that will affect their driving capabilities. Other new features include enhanced graphics (a single car's polygon count is roughly 10 times that found in GT2), 2-4 player, split-screen racing, new, detailed courses and additional car models. Building upon the winning formula that made its predecessors such huge hits, GT 2000 looks to be a technological breakthrough.



KEY FEATURES

- 1-4 player, split-screen racing
- New courses and cars
- All-new car models
- Dualshock2 analog button support
- Changing environments
- 60 FPS gameplay

Genre Racing
Publisher
Developer
Release Date

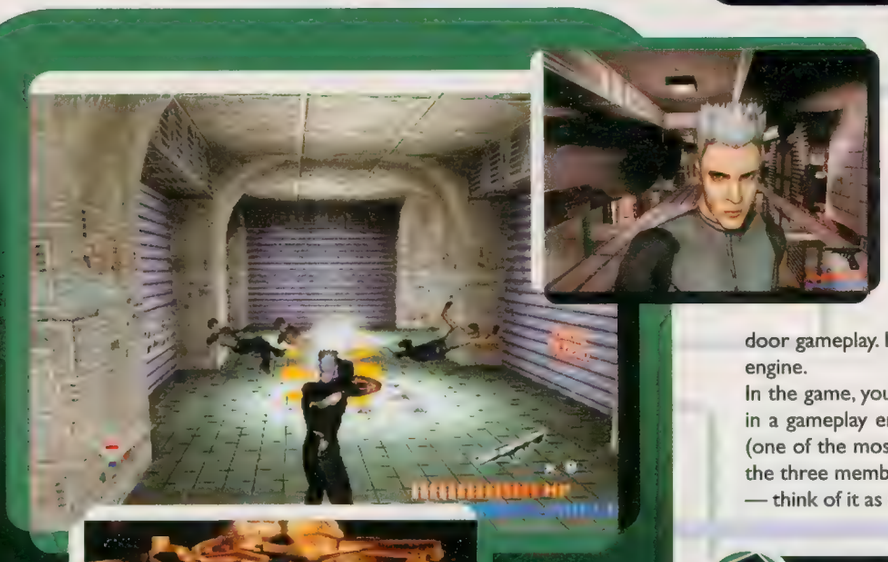
MOTO GP

Namco is planning on releasing their 3rd PlayStation2 game in time for the holidays — something we should definitely all give thanks for. Currently titled Moto GP, this motorcycle racer is a straight-forward arcade/sim featuring authentic bikes, famous Gran Prix riders and real-world courses. In the 60% previewable version we received, five courses were playable — Suzuka, Paul Ricard, Jerez, Donington and Motegi, with the possibility of more that can be unlocked and uncovered as you progress through the ranks. In the game, you will find a variety of different game modes to tackle, from the traditional Arcade, Season, Vs and Time Trial, to a special Gran Turismo-like Challenge mode, where you will be presented with 54 different racing-related tasks/objectives to complete. These objectives range from getting from point A to point B in a certain amount of time and placing first in a race, to beating a rival or learning the handling mechanics or your motorcycle. As you complete these challenges, you will unlock and open a host of cool extras. Some of the other features of this game include a crisp, colorful and super-fast graphic engine (possibly a RRV hybrid) running at 60 fps and a very cool replay option that puts Gran Turismo's to shame.

KEY FEATURES

- 33 different bikes with which to race
- Unique Challenge Mode with 54 different challenges
- Running at 60 frames per second in high resolution
- Uses a hybrid of the Ridge Racer V engine
- Real world bikes, riders and circuits
- Both Arcade and Simulation modes
- Two player, split screen racing

X SQUAD



X-Squad is in an enviable launch position — it is one of the few games featuring content that is new to PS2 and not a sequel to a PlayStation title. As such, the first million PS2 owners, all of whom already own PS1 and (for the most part) Dreamcast, will be starved for this game. We received our first playable copy of the game just before we went to press with this issue and were able to spend a few days with it.

While X-Squad won't win any "Most Original" awards, it is a solid, entertaining action game that features mostly shooting and a lot of find the switch, open the door gameplay. It is also one of the most attractive launch titles, with a nice looking, first-generation engine.

In the game, you control Ash, one of four characters that will do battle with the forces of evil within a gameplay environment that is more than a little reminiscent of EA/Delphine's "Fade to Black" (one of the most underrated (and undersold) PS1 games. You have the ability to issue commands to the three members of your team (you pick them up in the first two levels), like "Follow", or "Recon" — think of it as a baby Rainbow 6. As you move deeper into the game, you will find your fellow Squad members to be more than helpful, particularly in boss encounters.

Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher EA
Developer EA Japan
Release Date October 26

KEY FEATURES

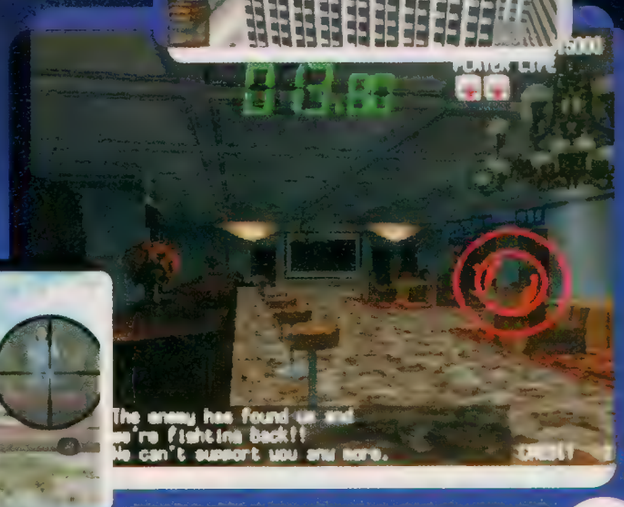
- Very well-done 3D engine
- Great lighting and special FX
- Three AI squad members help as game progresses
- Variety of weapons, including: sniper gun, flame thrower, machine gun, etc.
- Third-person presentation
- Ability to issue Squad commands
- Weapons and Items shop

Genre Shooter
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami
Release Date October 26

SILENT SCOPE

Konami's arcade super-sniper is coming home for the PS2 on day one and is, as it should be, looking arcade-perfect. Unfortunately, there is no light gun option available for the game (no light gun peripheral has been announced to date), but the developers at Konami have spent a lot of time tweaking the Dual Shock2's analog controls, so you won't miss it. From the previewable version we've been playing at our offices, they've done a pretty good job. Holding down the L1 button zooms out the cursor, which allows you to scan the screen quickly while pinpointing your next target. When you let go of the button, the scope zooms in for a tight view of your next victim.

For those of you who haven't played the game in the arcades before, the game is basically an "on rails" shooter, a la Virtua Cop or House of the Dead (except that you are in the position of a trained sharpshooter). In addition to the straight-up arcade mode (which is a faithful translation of the coin-op), Konami is offering up extra-added replay value with a few new options and features, such as training and story modes.



KEY FEATURES

- Pixel-perfect arcade translation (would you expect less?)
- Extra modes — Story, Training, etc.
- Enhanced control configured for the Dual Shock2
- Fast-paced arcade experience

Genre Beat 'Em Up
Publisher Koei
Developer Omega Force
Release Date November

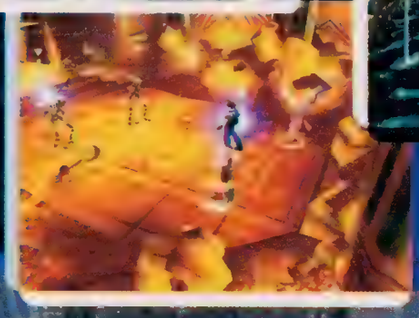
Dynasty Warriors 2

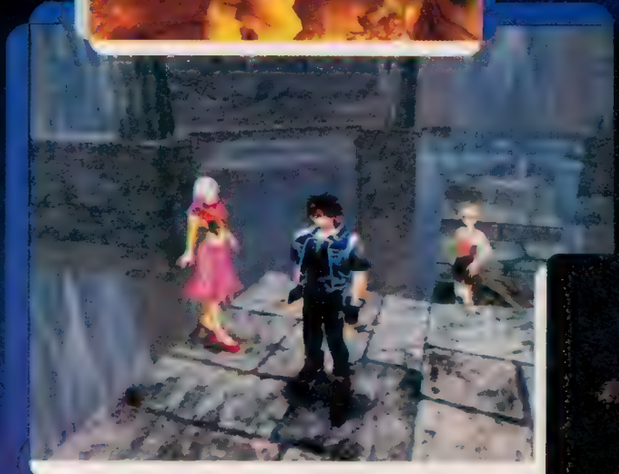
Koei is continuing to do what they do best — historical action/strategy games revolving around ancient Chinese history. Their latest release, Dynasty Warriors 2, due out for the PS2 at launch and developed by Omega Force (Destrega, Dynasty Warriors), is a sequel to the original of sorts. Taking advantage of the PS2's massive polygon pushing powers, this tactical action game drops the player smack dab into the middle of a massive war. Like the film Braveheart, you'll have to work your way through hundreds of enemies, slashing, kicking, punching, piercing and slaying as many as you can while working toward your ultimate goal — unite China under one ruler, your ruler.

While on the surface, DW2 might look like your typical beat 'em up, there are many strategic/simulation elements to the game that make it so much more. Geography, your army's morale, taking out higher ranking officers and gaining experience points all must be considered during a battle in order to ultimately succeed. You can even mount a horse to get across great distances (some battlefields are as big as 150 acres) and/or ride straight into the opposing army's troops. There is also a high amount of eye candy in the game as well, with literally 30-40 characters on screen simultaneously with no slowdown whatsoever and plenty of detailed touches, such as rain, fog, snow and dust.

Key Features

- Set in the Three Kingdoms time period
- 30-40 characters on screen simultaneously with no slowdown
- Strategic elements incorporated in the game
- A total of 28 playable characters to unlock
- Nice graphic environmental touches — fog, rain, snow, dust





Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher Activision
Developer Kadokawa/Eas
Release Date Q1, 01

Orphen

One of the unexpected PlayStation2 titles to debut at this year's E3 show, Activision's "Orphen" will be one of the first Action/Adventure titles to ship for the system. Orphen is a stunningly beautiful, Action/Adventure featuring traditional RPG elements, such as character "parties." With intelligently designed, event based puzzles and battles, the mysteries that haunt Chaos Island unfold only as a direct result of the player's actions. In the game, the player has the ability to manage Multiple Playable Characters - and can play as Orphen and three other event-based characters along their travels. Players can gain control of party members as they progress. By adding one of several additional characters to the player's party at the beginning of the game, they can trigger multiple storylines.

In this mysterious Action/Adventure, players can join their party of unlikely allies as they run, climb and jump through underground caverns, giant castles, ice mountains and dark forests — and solve hundreds of action-based puzzles and collect "crystal eggs" to escape the mysterious Chaos Island. In addition, Orphen features event-based RPG Battles - where players have the opportunity to master 60 attacks, including spells and weapons, as they confront 30 types of maniacal monsters.

Orphen also features a vast, cinematic world that makes use of an immense, mystical world of beautifully texture-mapped 3D indoor and outdoor environments, featuring real-time light-sourcing, shadows and environmental effects.

Key Features

- Third-person viewpoint
- Play as four different characters
- Multiple storylines based on player's actions
- Variety of exterior and interior game environments
- Event-based, RPG style battles
- Many different attacks, spells and weapons

PlayStation 2

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- Join the ranks of heroes of old as you fight through hundreds of merciless warriors for the greatest prize of all — China!

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TEEN T Animated Violence

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

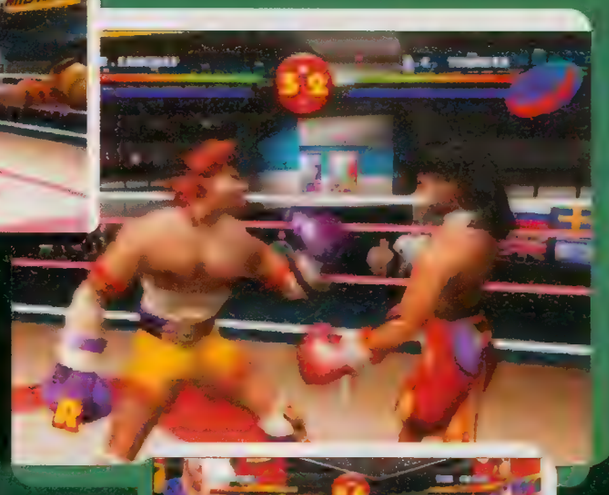
KOEI

www.koeigames.com

Genre Sports
Publisher Midway
Developer Midway
Release Date October

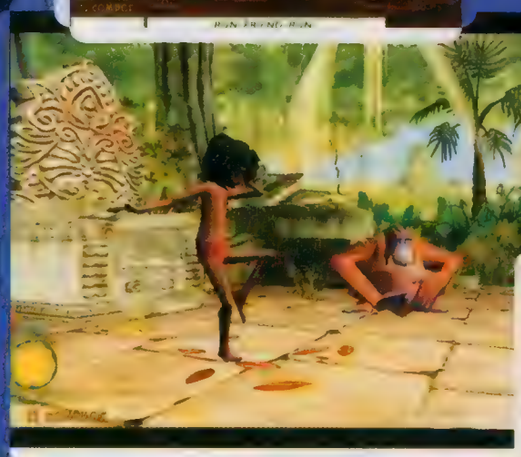
Ready 2 Rumble 2: 2nd Bout

Midway was right there at launch last September with Ready 2 Rumble for the Dreamcast and they will be there with the sequel for PS2 this October. Continuing the same, over-the-top arcade-style action from the first game, Ready 2 Rumble 2: 2nd Bout promises more crazy characters (possibly up to 24), more special moves and taunts, a host of game modes, including Arcade, Championship, Tournament and Team Battle, and plenty of new options and features that will make this game one to grab on Day One. Most of the cast of the original will be stepping back into the ring, as well as a host of new rookies, including a few well-known celebrity faces (Michael Jackson and Shaq, to name a few). Some of the other additions to the game include the ability to pummel your opponent as he's going down for the count, extremely high poly count characters — these guys have never looked so good, and a much improved camera system. The PS2 version of R2R: 2nd Bout will be running in high-resolution and at a silky smooth 60 frames per second. Midway is diligently working towards an October release and, from the previewable version we've played, it looks like they will be a contender.



Key Features

- Up to 24 playable fighters to unlock
- A variety of game modes: Arcade, Championship, Tournament, Team Battle
- Displayed in High Resolution
- 60 frames per second action
- Play as Michael Jackson and Shaquille O'Neal



Genre Dancing
Publisher Ubi Soft
Developer Ubi Soft
Release Date January

Jungle Book Rhythm N' Groove

Fans of one of Walt Disney Pictures' most popular films will be able to join Mowgli, Baloo and friends in Jungle Book Rhythm N' Groove, Ubi Soft's entry into the Dancing genre created by such games as PaRappa and Bust a Groove. Scheduled for release early next year, Jungle Book follows the original plot of the movie while challenging players to dance their way through the jungle by imitating the moves of other characters, a la Dance, Dance Revolution. In the game, players must follow the correct beat using their Dual Shock or a specially bundled dance mat. Like most dancing/Bemani games, you'll have to execute the move along with the beat, requiring a certain amount of rhythm and timing to do it perfectly. As you play against and beat the other characters, they will become unlocked and playable in the multiplayer mode. Expect all of the cast from the animated movie to be here, including Bagheera, Kaa and King Louie. Developed internally by Ubi Soft, this game is going to be skewed toward a younger audience, but should also appeal to the three different generations who grew up watching the movie. Expect a great soundtrack with some special goodies, high-res, 3D graphics that look just like the animated film and both single player and head-to-head competition.

Key Features

- Dance with all the characters from the movie: Mowgli, Baloo, etc.
- All of the songs from the movie, including the "Bear Necessities"
- Musician Lou Bega (Mambo #5) sings "I Wanna Be Like You"
- Special Dance Mat bundled in with game
- 1 or 2 Players — Dance as Mowgli in Story Mode or go head-to-head
- High-res, cartoon-style graphics that mimic the movie

PROJECT EDEN

In the future, overpopulation of the planet has led to the growth of huge mega-cities with millions of inhabitants. Space is at a premium, so the buildings grow ever upwards, with a thick web of interconnecting roads and walkways between them. The overall effect is of a giant, human hive — where the affluent strive to live in the newest apartments as near to the top (and the sunlight) as possible. As you go down through the levels, conditions decline until you reach the lower levels, which are the oldest areas and contain the slums. People living at these levels have rarely seen direct sunlight, except where it can be glimpsed through the dense network of roadways above them. Below them lie even more levels, containing the Underlife — the criminals, cultists and deranged. The lowest levels are assumed to be deserted, and are only visited occasionally by engineering teams who need to strengthen the buildings in order to allow more levels to be added at the top.

It is the disappearance of one of these engineering teams that forms the basis of the plot of "Project Eden". They have been sent to the lower levels for a routine maintenance check but they have not returned or called-in, and efforts to contact them have failed. As usual, they were accompanied by a small armed escort to prevent trouble if they encountered any trouble from the Underlife, so their disappearance is very suspect. Time to send in the Security Squad!

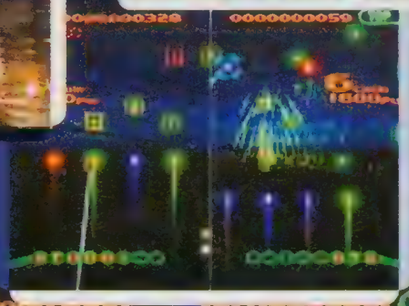
Genre
Publisher
Developer
Release Date Q2. 01

KEY FEATURES

- First-person action/adventure
- Control over entire squad of characters
- Attack and Defense play modes
- Environments include disused malls, sport centers, etc.
- Large variety of enemies (Underlife)
- Puzzles based on solving environmental problems

Genre Puzzle
Publisher
Developer
Release Date October 26

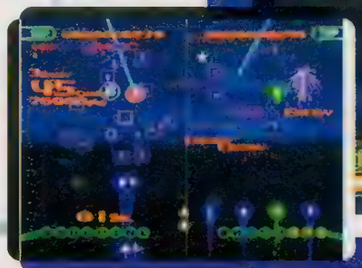
FANTAVISION



The full graphical capabilities of the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system are truly displayed in SCEA's newest puzzle game, Fantavision. In this launch title (which was also available at the Japanese launch of PS2), one to two players will be able to create fantastic fireworks displays, using a combination of unique gameplay and advanced graphics, mixed with excellent lighting and explosive visual effects, to make this one of the most visually impressive titles available for the system. Fantavision puts gamers in control of massive fireworks displays in settings all over the world, including cityscapes, an amusement park and an orbiting space station. Using an on-screen cursor, players select color combinations of fireworks as they launch onto the screen, before detonating the explosion to create chains of fireworks. The better the display, the more points that are collected to move to more advanced levels and earn bonus rounds. Fantavision also allows players to enjoy the true splendor of their fireworks displays through the replay mode, with options to select the camera angle, change conditions such as weather, and add a variety of psychedelic special effects. A new two-player mode will add even more depth and challenge to this innovative experience. The 3D graphics and real-time lighting effects allow users to individually render totally unique fireworks sequences every time they play.

KEY FEATURES

- 1-2 players
- Instant replay feature
- Real-time lighting effects
- Accessible, addictive gameplay
- Multiple camera angles
- Changing weather conditions



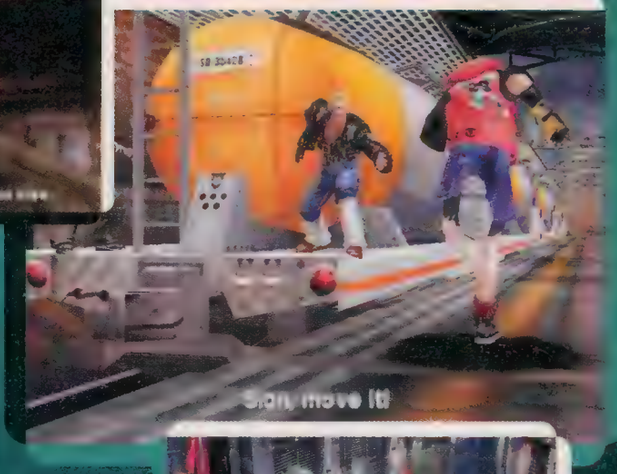
Genre Action
Publisher Square
Developer Dream Factory
Release Date Winter

THE BOUNCER

Unfortunately, for one of the first titles shown back when the PlayStation2 was unveiled in Japan, Square's The Bouncer is still pretty much a no-show. With the exception of a few new screens here and there, nobody outside of Squaresoft in Japan has even seen actual gameplay footage. Typically, with Square, this would be a non-issue, as if there was ever one company who has consistently delivered the goods, title after title, it's them. However, their PS2 track record to date has been spotty at best (Driving Emotion, ahem).

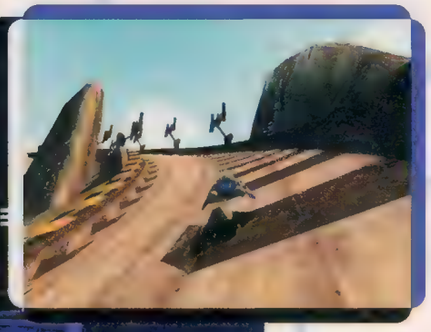
Developed with the US market in mind, The Bouncer has been described as a blending of movie and gameplay. What we can gather is that it probably plays a bit like a typical beat 'em up, except that it will be story driven and there will be a lot more going on in your surroundings (teammates fighting other enemies, interactive environments, etc.).

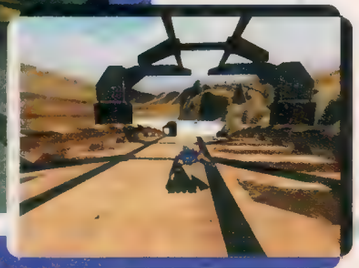
The Bouncer's storyline focuses on a young bouncer named Sion Barzahd who works at the local bar FATE. On a typical day like any other, he is greeted by the girl of his dreams, Dominque, just as he is about to start his shift. Unfortunately, this day turns out to be a nightmare, as he watches helplessly while she is kidnapped by a brutal gang of henchman. It's going to be up to you to rescue her and find out the mysteries surrounding her capture.



KEY FEATURES

- A colorful cast of characters
- Intense fighting with multiple characters on-screen simultaneously
- Developed for the US market first
- High resolution, 60 frames per second game play
- Developed by Dream Factory, of Tobal fame





Genre Racing
Publisher SCEA
Developer Psygnosis
Release Date December 00

WIPEOUT FUSION

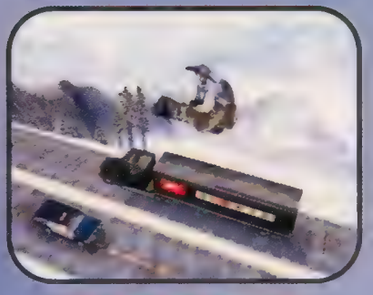
Psygnosis' Wipeout Fusion was only shown to the press very briefly on videotape at this year's E3. As of press time, only a smattering of shots have been made available and there, unfortunately, have been no substantial announcements about the game, when it will officially ship to stores and who is going to be the official publisher (although all signs point to SCEA). What we can comment on is that the game promises to take the series a massive step forward, not only with the new greater power of the PlayStation2, but with the addition of completely new gameplay features, tracks, ships, weapons and game modes. Additionally, taking note of the feedback the developers have received from the earlier Wipeout games, WO: Fusion is being specifically designed to make it more accessible to the occasional gamer, while keeping in tact the elements that appealed to the traditional "hardcore" player. Developed by the Psygnosis' Liverpool Studios, the same team responsible for the first two Wipeouts, as well as a host of other titles (Colony Wars, Psybadek, Krazy Ivan), Wipeout Fusion will offer a new generation of race craft capable of true anti-gravity maneuvers and a wide range of racing venues, each with its own new interactive features (including some with freeform areas that don't limit pilots to just following the track).

KEY FEATURES

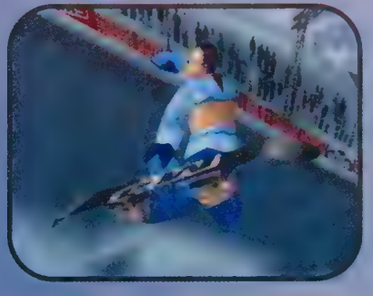
- Developed by Studio Liverpool (the original Wipeout and Wipeout XL coders)
- Anti-gravity vehicles have 48 parameters of handling
- Ability to race upside down or at any angle the player chooses
- Freeform tracks that allow players to make their own paths
- Enhanced weapons systems

MTV SPORTS PURE RIDE

Ride the entire mountain.



Build your own mountain,
full of cars, kickers, trees and rails.



Combine jumps, tricks and grinds
in the all-new stunt mode.

We've given you total freedom.
Now shut up and ride.

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

GAME BOY COLOR

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THQ™

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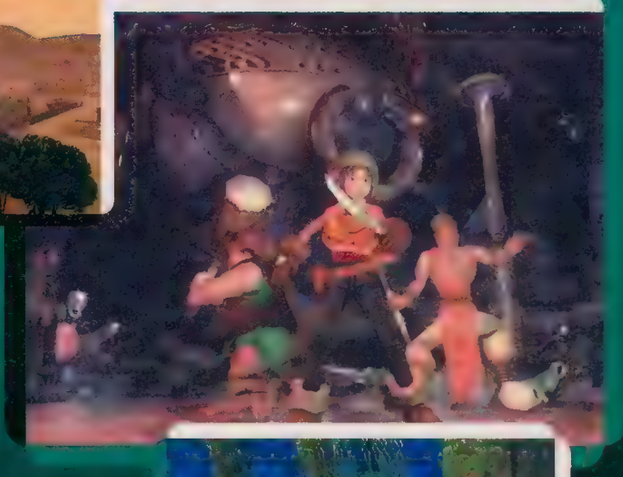
Genre RPG
Publisher
Developer
Release Date

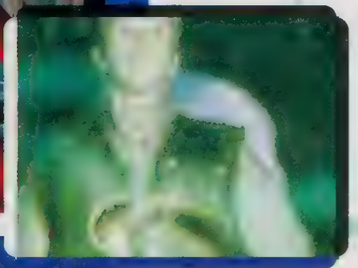
Dark Cloud



You can bet, with the success of the Final Fantasy and Legend of Dragoon series' on PS1, that Sony will not forget those noble knights that wish to begin their quests anew on PS2! RPG fans can create and explore their own virtual world in Dark Cloud, a unique 3D role-playing adventure game that challenges players not only to strategize, battle and solve puzzles, but also to create geographical landscapes using the new "Georama" feature system. Players assume the role of a young, innocent hero named Toran on an unforgettable epic journey of rebirth, revival and renewed hope. An evil demon spirit has been released and has left destruction in its wake. He has transformed all living things and imprisoned them in a dungeon cave far beneath the reaches of the light. Toran, who has been given the extraordinary gift of life, is the only hope for those who perished. He must harness the spirits of those destroyed and rebuild the lands in preparation for a final confrontation.
Dark Cloud is the epic, killer application that PS2 owners will be thirsting for. With beautiful, fast and unparalleled graphics, three unique gameplay modes and a deep, long adventure that promises to have players glued to their screens for hour upon hour, Dark Cloud is sure to be a big hit on PS2!

Key Features

- True-to-life graphics
- Ability to build your own worlds
- Real-time transitions between modes of play
- Three modes of play: Exploration, Battle and Creation
- Third-person presentation
- "Georama" feature allows for land mass creation



Genre
Publisher
Developer
Release Date

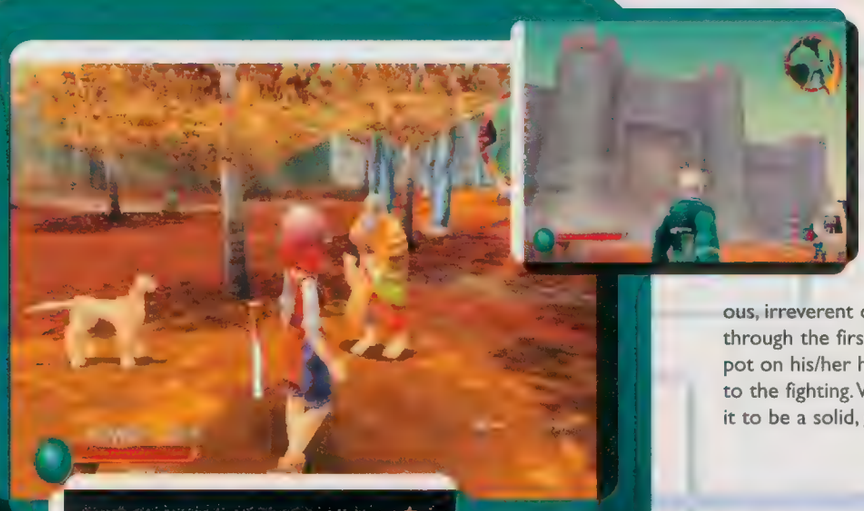
Eternal Ring

Unlock the powers of the past in Eternal Ring, a real-time 3D RPG. Set on a remote island where dragons and a host of nightmarish enemies are free to roam, the home of the legendary "Eternal Ring" is a mystical place shrouded in mystery. Origins of the island are still unknown to the inhabitants, yet myths and fables point to signs of a hidden civilization. The player not only experiences battles, but also a world of virtual 3D space, which incorporates changes in time, geography and weather. The character's abilities will change substantially by the types of rings the player carries.
Developed by From Software, the design house behind the King's Field series, Eternal Ring is an expansive quest presented from a first-person point of view. Combat is carried-out in real-time, in an arcade style and features a hit point system where, through battle, the acquisition of Rings and by defeating bosses, the player can improve his abilities as he makes his way through the adventure. The cities, caves and castles featured throughout Eternal Ring's landscape are detailed and attractive and the game moves along at a brisk pace — combining the best of exploration and RPG style combat. If you are lucky enough to have a PS2 on October 26, you'll want to take a look at Eternal Ring!

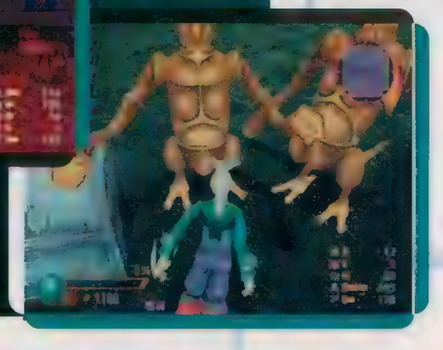
Key Features

- First-person viewpoint
- Real-time combat
- Changing weather and geography
- Variety of weapons and magic
- Intense boss battles
- Dramatic story that unfolds as you play

EVERGRACE



Evergrace is one of the few original content PS2 games that has shipped in Japan. Although it began its life as a PlayStation title, it has evolved into an action/RPG that is easily accessible to all gamers. The game allows you to fill the roles of both male and female lead characters, each with his/her own strengths and weaknesses, as you embark on an epic quest against the forces of evil. One of the game's key features is the ability to find and upgrade your armor. Helmets, boots, weapons, shields, etc., can be purchased or discovered as you make your way through the game. In fact, it is this element of Evergrace that gives the game its sightly humorous, irreverent quality. An example of this can be found in a couple of helmet variations. As you play through the first few areas of the game, you will find your character wearing both a pumpkin and a pot on his/her head! All combat in the game is carried out in real-time, with a Zelda-like, arcade feel to the fighting. We have played the Japanese version of the game for a number of hours and believe it to be a solid, good looking, first-generation PS2 title.



Genre Action/RPG
Publisher
Developer
Release Date November 00

KEY FEATURES

- Both male and female lead characters
- Both characters required to solve puzzles in levels
- Third-person presentation
- Large number of weapons, potions and magic
- Items Shop accessible within levels
- Interior and exterior environments
- Real-time combat

Genre Fighting
Publisher Tecmo
Developer Team Ninja
Release Date November 00

DEAD OR ALIVE 2: HARDCORE

Already available for the Japanese PS2 for some time now, Dead or Alive 2 is going through a second round of enhancements and changes for its US release and will ship under the new name Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore. Originally a NAOMI arcade game, this 3D fighter was ported over to the PlayStation2 effortlessly but, due to time constraints, Team Ninja (the developers) were not able to include and follow through with everything they wanted to do in the game. With the US release, there are going to be plenty of additions and improvements, including a newly-designed graphic engine from the ground up (say goodbye to the "jaggies"), a host of new fighting arenas, American voice overs for all of the characters, new in-game intro and ending movies, new costumes and character-specific moves, and even a few, new play modes that have yet to be announced — whew! Very rarely does a developer/publisher spend so much time reworking a game during localization and it's nice a company such as Tecmo is willing to make the effort and spend the dough to perfect their game. As it stands now, DOA 2 already gives Tekken Tag a run for its money. It will be interesting to see the end result for both of these products when they ship in a few months.

KEY FEATURES

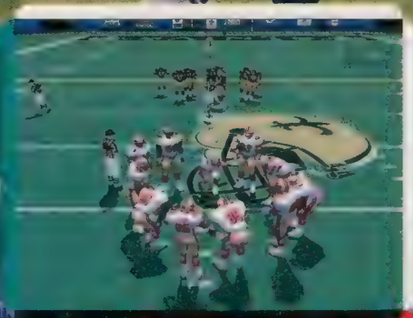
- Blistering fast, 60 fps gameplay
- A host of graphical enhancements and improvements over the Japanese release
- Plenty of hidden characters and alternate costumes to uncover
- Special tag team moves
- Story and Vs modes

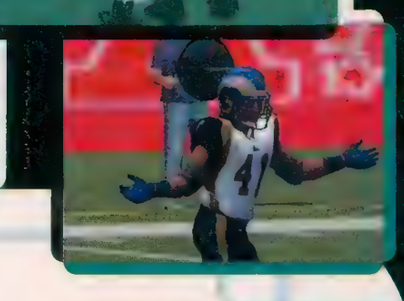
MADDEN NFL 2001

Genre Football
Publisher EA Sports
Developer EA Sports
Release Date October

Madden NFL 2001 is the latest incarnation of the popular football series from EA Sports, which is also the longest running sports franchise in video game history. The Madden name first made its debut back on an Apple II home computer almost eleven years ago and, since that time, has seen versions published for the Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo, Sega Saturn, PlayStation, N64, PC, and the GameBoy.

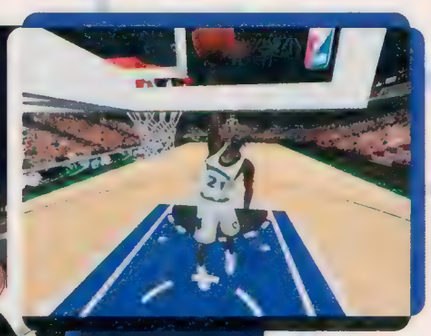
Well, one thing's for certain, and that is that nobody will confuse any of those prior versions of Madden with the new one for the PS2. Madden NFL 2001 is setting a new standard for graphic achievement in a videogame, with highly detailed player models and 3D digital face mapping technology that brings the players to life. The detail is so encompassing, in fact, that you'll see the individual facemasks, just like the ones the real players use — no more one-style-fits-all facemasks. In addition, the wristbands, turf tape, visors, and elbow pads have all been individually keyed to the players so that what you see them wear on Sundays is what you'll see them wear in Madden 2001. Of course, John Madden and Pat Summerall still join forces in the booth to help bring you all the play-by-play.





KEY FEATURES

- Every All-Madden team is included (back to 1984)
- "Madden Cards" unlock hidden teams & players and can be traded via memory card
- Player models are height & weight proportional
- All NFL coaches are in the game and on the sidelines
- Highly detailed player models



Genre Basketball
Publisher EA Sports
Developer EA Canada
Release Date Fall

NBA LIVE 2001

NBA Live 2001 looks to set a new standard in hoop games, as the popular franchise begins its inagural PS2 season. Actually, the Live series is now 7 years old, having debuted on the Sega Genesis as "Live 95" (prior to being called "Live", the series was known as "NBA Showdown"). Over the course of the years, the Live games have evolved from pixely sprites to low-count polygons, and finally, to the life-like high-count polygonal characters that we see featured in the PS2 version. Besides the increased detail in the players, EA is looking to achieve added realism by providing animated team benches (the 12th man can be seen waving a towel) and crowds (they move independent of one another, and jump up and down like lunatic fans are want to do). Also new for 2001 is something called "action transitions", where you'll get a closeup of a coach, player, or ref after a change of position, foul call, or timeout. It's only a matter of time before NBA coaches are licensed — you want to see the real Pat Riley arguing with the ref, don't you?

All Star 7-footer Kevin Garnett provided some of the motion capturing for Live 2001, adding his unique flair for high flying jams and medium range jumpers. There's also a fancy country & western, we mean hip-hop & rap, soundtrack included.

KEY FEATURES

- High poly count player models
- Cyberscan technology producing detailed player faces
- Animated team benches, coaches & crowds
- Wide arrange of new animations
- Multi-tiered Create-a-Player feature

SWING AWAY GOLF

While EA Sports will also be responsible for bringing Tiger Woods to PS2, they are going to be hard-pressed to better the gameplay and outstanding graphics found in "Swing Away Golf." SAG is the American version of T&E Soft's "Paradise Golf" — a title that shipped shortly after the Japanese launch of the system. T&E Soft has been developing golf games for a very long time, on just about every piece of hardware imaginable — including Virtual Boy and the Saturn! Swing Away Golf is, without question, one of the best-looking games on PS2 and very easy for even novice golfers to get into. Playing much like the "Hot Shots" series, SAG offers players incredible looking courses, a competitive gameplay environment, whether against the computer or a friend or three, and T&E Soft's unparalleled putting system. In addition, players can earn points for performing well in tournaments (and wagering against opponents) and use the points in the Pro Shop to upgrade their equipment. In the game's Story Mode, you can begin play as an amateur and work your way through qualifying to compete on the Pro Tour. If you've wondered what all of the excitement about Tiger Woods and golf is about, Swing Away Golf can show you how exciting and fun the game is.

Genre Golf
Publisher
Developer
Release Date November

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4 players
- Six different courses
- Beautiful, detailed graphics
- Seven, Anime-style golfers
- Arcade-style gameplay
- Course designer
- Ability to unlock additional, secret characters and courses
- Complete career statistics
- Pro Shop to upgrade equipment
- Driving range and Practice green

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2001

Genre Golf
Publisher EA Sports
Developer EA Sports
Release Date Winter

The most dominant figure in sports for the new millennium is Tiger Woods, and it's no surprise that EA Sports continues to use Tiger as their poster boy for the PGA Tour series (which is coming close to its tenth anniversary). The PGA Tour franchise has always leaned more on the simulation side of the gaming spectrum than toward the arcade side, but with the advent of the PS2, EA Sports is looking to shift the gameplay to a "happy medium", incorporating a realistic golf game that is quick and intuitive to play. One way to do this is by eliminating the frustrating putting scheme prevalent in the previous version. Tiger Woods 2001 aims to put the fun back into the series by making the greens easier to read, allowing for a better chance of sinking that 20 footer!

Although the list of courses to be included has not yet been finalized, we do know that Pebble Beach, Poppy Hills, and Spy Glass will all be part of the package. Likewise, the list of professional players is only partially available, as pros Justin Leonard, Brad Faxon, Mark Calcavecchia, Robert Damron, and Stewart Cink (as well as Tiger) are the ones currently named to be in the game. Of the various game modes, PGA Tour mode allows you to compete in an entire simulated season, from Winter to Fall.

KEY FEATURES

- Play as or against Tiger Woods
- Full 3D real-time cameras track ball flight
- Play in a Pro-Am with professionals & amateurs
- Follow your name on the Leader Board throughout the entire PGA Tour season
- Play at Pebble Beach, Poppy Hills, Spy Glass, and other top notch courses

Genre Sports
Publisher
Developer
Release Date October '26

SSX SNOWBOARDING

SSX from EA Sports is one of the more highly anticipated launch titles for the PS2. Although the entire snowboarding style of games has lost steam over the past few years on the PlayStation, SSX looks to rejuvenate the genre thanks to its precise control, huge tracks, and next generation graphics.

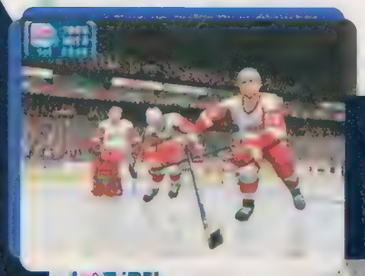
The game contains three different gameplay modes that offer challenges for novices and skilled snowboarding gamers. In Freeride, you can get started quickly, and enjoy the mountain at your own pace. In Single Event, you can compete in one race, as you you battle the computer opponents for the fastest time. Lastly, there's the World Competition, where you'll compete in a season long schedule of events to try and become the number 1 snowboarder across the globe!

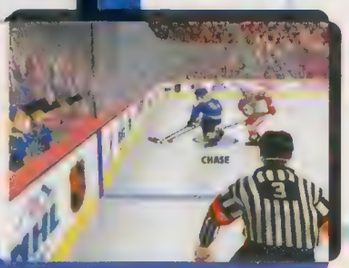
There are six distinct tracks to ride, and a couple of bonus tracks thrown in as well. The courses all have their own signature look, from icebergs to pinball-like skate parks (complete with moving flippers, ramps, and doors). Besides the inspired look of the courses, the runs are also very long, and all have multiple paths and shortcuts to offer. You never know what you'll find when you go through an opening in the trees, or take that drop off of the "other" side of the mountain!

Another unique feature is the Adrenalin Bar, which increases as you pull off more tricks and stunts. The tempo of the music (provided by many artists) will also increase as your Adrenalin Bar goes up!

KEY FEATURES

- Eight huge courses (two hidden) to carve
- Three distinct gameplay modes
- Players can bump and shove their way into first place
- Lightning fast arcade style gameplay
- Licensed and original musical tracks from Mix Master Mike, Rahzel, Aphrodite & Mickey Finn and many more





Genre Sports
Publisher
Developer
Release Date Winter

NHL 2001

NHL 2001 from EA Sports will include 50 different hockey teams — all 30 NHL teams and 20 international squads. Just in case you missed it, the NHL has expanded to include two new teams: the Columbus Blue Jackets and the Minnesota Wild. For those of you that have a hankerin' to play as Latvia or Ukraine, you'll be pleased-as-punch to know that those teams have been included in the international clubs (NHL 2002 should see the inclusion of powerhouse teams from Beirut & Da Nong). Among the many new features include a few that are PS2 specific, like the ability to customize player elements to your own tastes (skating, checking, passing & shooting). On-screen icons tell you who's hot, in a slump, a nasty hitter, or a big shooter. Four gameplay modes can be selected, including quick games, season, playoffs, and tournament. A new momentum meter keeps track of which team is on a roll, and the camera angles have been improved to bring you as close to the action as possible. The player models have all been built from the ground up to showcase the PS2's graphic capabilities, and you'll be able to see more facial expressions and special moves than ever before. All of the excitement of NHL hockey, from pregame introductions to post game wrapups, will be on display in NHL 2001.

KEY FEATURES

- New Momentum Meter indicates which team is in charge
- Fantasy mode with dispersal draft
- Big Shots & Big Hitters icon helps identify power players
- Advanced CPU AI delivers ultimate one player challenge
- New animations, including one footed shots & cannon shots from the point

NASCAR 2001

NASCAR 2001, along with Madden 2001, was one of the two PS2 games that had the crowd in awe at E3. These games gave an early indication of the power of the next PlayStation, and demonstrated that the system could make better looking games than the previously uninspired batch of games that we had seen in Japan (a billiards game, for Pete's sake!). Five months later, NASCAR is just about ready to hit the retail outlets, and it appears ready to take on all challengers.

Graphically, NASCAR 2001 delivers a multitude of special f/x to enhance the overall visual experience. Tires smoke as they try to avoid a nasty collision, and car parts fly all over the track if the tires fail to do their job (that is, avoid the crash!). It's possible to get lost in the fog of tire smoke created by the cars in front of you, and it's even more possible that you'll see car-less tires rolling down the track!

New for 2001 is the addition of the Daytona 500. The computer drivers are all independent thinkers now (before, they reacted as a single entity), so you'll see Earnhardt take his ride deep into the corners, and watch in amazement as Gordon pilots his car smoothly in and out of the turns.

Genre Racing
Publisher
Developer
Release Date November

KEY FEATURES

- 33 drivers including the Earnhardts, Labontes, Waltrips, & Pettys
- 18 official NASCAR tracks, including Daytona
- Smarter CPU AI for enhanced computer competition
- Interactive pits require you to do the work
- Career mode allows for sponsorship deals

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

Genre Sports
Publisher
Developer
Release Date Winter

Knockout Kings 2001 is currently the only boxing simulation we know of in development for the PlayStation 2. Of course, the fact that the PS2 will have a boxing sim. in its stable after only 4-6 months is slightly short of remarkable, as the PlayStation didn't get one for almost four YEARS! The Knockout King franchise has always included dozens of the greatest boxers in history, and continues to do so this year — Ali, Frazier, Leonard, Hagler, Duran, Marciano, De La Hoya, just to name a few. The big news this year is that the game will include members from boxing's newest fraternity — women pugilists! Although no names have been been released as of this time, Knockout Kings 2001 would be remiss if Christy Martin isn't one of the women included, as she is single-handedly responsible for the interest in women's boxing.

The strength of the PS2 makes it possible for the life-like look of KK2K1, as the 3D face & body mapping detail every inch of the fighters. The gameplay is also smoother, and features a new punching mechanism dubbed "Dynamic Punch Control". This system allows the user to create fast + seamless punch combinations. There are many new "signature moves", an updated soundtrack, new world famous arenas, and much more.

KEY FEATURES

- 3D face/body mapping creates greater character detail
- Dynamic Punch Control for enhanced combination creation
- In-fight commentary from Al Bernstein, Max Kellerman & Teddy Atlas
- Referee (Judge) Mills Lane & Richard Steele control the fights
- Deep career mode with emphasis on training
- More real fighters than ever before

Genre Sports
Publisher [illegible]
Developer [illegible]
Release Date October

ESPN INT'L TRACK & FIELD

One of the best multiplayer games to be seen on the PlayStation, Track & Field is set to make its mark on the PS2 under the name of "ESPN International Track & Field". All of the button-mashing tactics you remember from the PSX version will need to be utilized in the PS2 game as well, as you compete in a dozen different events. Choose from contests as diverse as Weight lifting and Skeet Shooting, and as physically challenging as Pole Vaulting and Long Jump. Your twitchy fingers will be put to the test in the 100 Meter Dash and the 110 Meter Hurdles. There are two types of gameplay — Single Event or Championship mode. Accumulate points after each event in the Championship mode, and the player with the most points after all of the events are completed wins the gold!

True to its arcade ancestors, ESPN International Track & Field features fast-paced gameplay, with colorful next generation graphics and superb animation. In fact, over 700 new animations have been motion captured, from Maurice (aka "World's Fastest Man") Green and Pole Vaulting champion Jeff Hartwig. Two time Olympic medalist Ato Boldon also joined the Konami team and helped provide some of the motion captured animations.

Be prepared to give those fingers a workout when ESPN International Track & Field ships this October.

KEY FEATURES

- Twelve different Olympic events
- ESPN broadcast quality look and feel
- Go for the gold in Championship mode
- Arcade style gameplay
- Multiplayer mayhem for up to four players

Genre Sports
Publisher [illegible]
Developer [illegible]
Release Date November

ESPN X GAMES SNOWBOARDING

Konami's ESPN X Games Snowboarding is one of FOUR titles bearing the ESPN brand that should ship within weeks of the PS2 launch. Snowboarding games became all the rage a few years ago, and their popularity does not appear to be diminishing. In fact, there should be at least three snowboarding games released for the new system by the end of 2000!

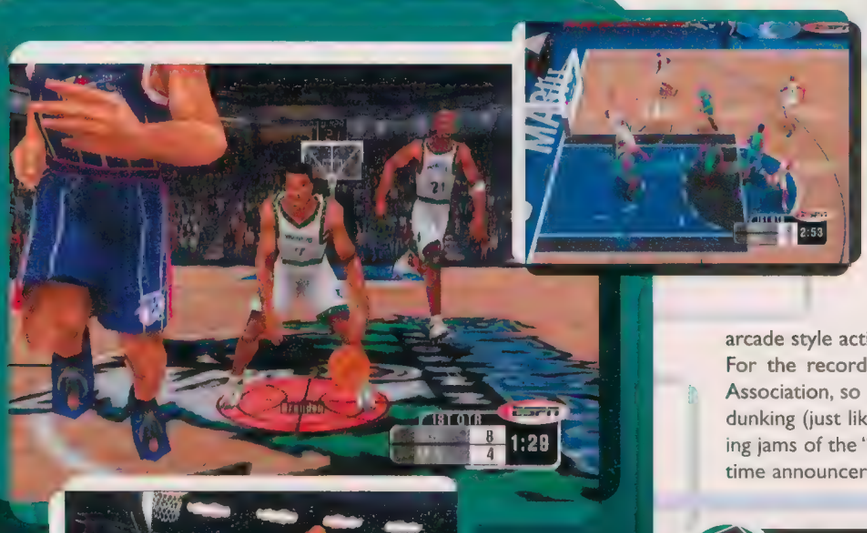
Obviously, what will distinguish Konami's snowboarding game from the competition is the ESPN and X Games licenses. Having the X Games license means that all of the snowboarding events in the X Games will be in this game — Big Air, Border Cross, Halfpipe, and Slopestyle. The ESPN trademark look and sound will be evident as gamers race over the mountains. Pre and post-race coverage and authentic ESPN camera angles help ensure the TV production look.

The artists on the soundtrack have yet to be revealed, but should include many well known bands and tunes. Over twenty apparel and gear manufacturers have their boots, suits, and boards available to be outfitted by your custom made rider. Konami has enlisted the help of many top snowboarding professionals to help make everything "real", but no names have been officially released as of this writing.

KEY FEATURES

- Four different snowboarding events
- Dozens of different boards & gear
- Full utilization of the ESPN license
- Custom create-a-rider mode
- Design your own mountain and go freestylin'

ESPN NBA 2NIGHT



Konami continues to try and and establish its sports games with the advent of the PS2 and the ESPN licensing agreement. Having had decent success with their In the Zone basketball series early in the life of the PlayStation, Konami's later efforts fell short of the expectations of gamers, thanks in part to other hoop games from EA Sports and 989 Sports. Now that Konami has added the ESPN license, the new franchise is being dubbed "ESPN NBA 2Night", after the TV show of same name. The game promises to add the energy and look of an ESPN telecast, combined with arcade style action and control.

For the record, NBA 2Night will have the appropriate licenses from the NBA and the Players Association, so all of the real NBA players will be in the game. There looks to be an emphasis on dunking (just like any good highlight show), and Konami states that there will be at least 25 high flying jams of the "jaw-dropping" variety. The play-by-play and color commentary are provided by long-time announcer Brent Musberger ("uh") and ESPN SportsCenter anchor Stuart Scott ("boo-yah" & "he must be butter, 'cause he's on a roll"). One of the aspects that sounds most intriguing is that NBA 2Night is supposed to feature post-game interviews with the player-of-the-game. How they're going to pull this one off (assuming it's not a text box), is something we want to see!

KEY FEATURES

- ESPN look and feel
- Fast-paced, arcade style game play
- Brent Musberger on play-by-play
- Stuart Scott behind the anchor desk
- Unique create-a-player mode for developing new talent

ESPN NFL PRIMETIME

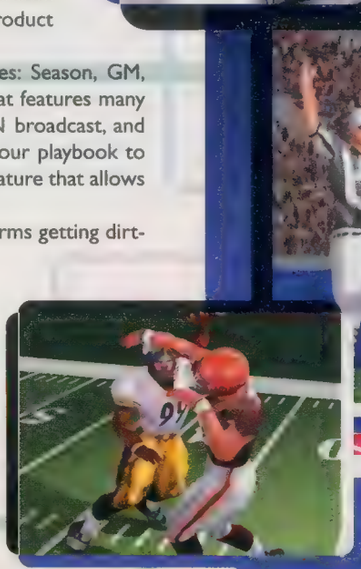
Konami's most ambitious sports title under the ESPN banner, ESPN NFL Primetime, is set to launch with the other three "ESPN" games this November. However, going up against EA Sports' Madden and 989 Sports' GameDay franchise won't be easy. The one thing that Konami has going that no one else can lay claim to is the ESPN license and, in particular, the voice talents of Chris "Boomer" Berman. Although Berman's act may be getting a little tired on the toob, it lends itself perfectly to a videogame, so there's hope that the product will have some energy from the audio department.

Features-wise, NFL Primetime will be packed with five different gameplay modes: Season, GM, Tournament, Practice, and Exhibition. There's also a unique create-a-player mode that features many levels of improvements. The camera angles have been tuned to look like an ESPN broadcast, and there's even a sports ticker at the bottom of the screen. You can also customize your playbook to include offensive and defensive plays that you created from scratch! There's even a feature that allows you to throw the ball before the receiver makes the cut — a true timing play!

Additionally, NFL Primetime shows off the advanced PS2 graphics with players uniforms getting dirtier as the game progresses, while coaches pace the sidelines.

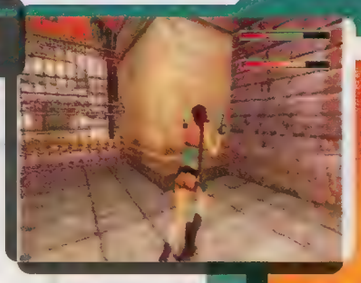
KEY FEATURES

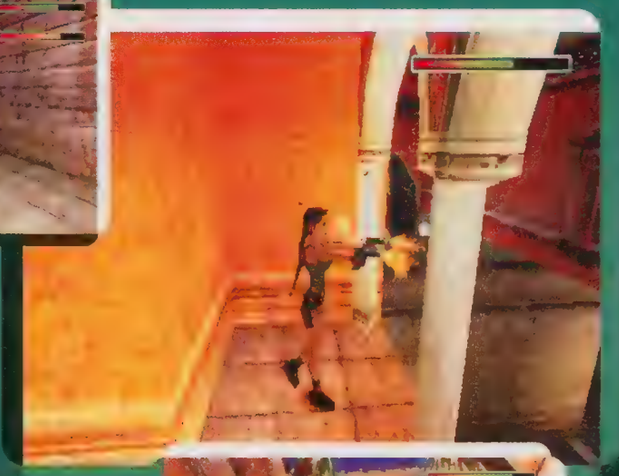
- Chris Berman and Tom Jackson providing play-by-play & color commentary
- Detailed Play Editor for creating unique plays
- High-rez graphics show the detail in full 3D
- Broadcast quality camera angles
- Full ESPN license provides look and feel of real ESPN coverage



Genre
Publisher
Developer
Release Date November 00

Tomb Raider Chronicles





Lara is back! Just when you thought Ms. Croft was no more, she makes yet another PlayStation return this holiday season with a whole new set of adventures. If you remember correctly from Tomb Raider IV, Lara let herself fall to her death rather than be rescued by Verner Von Kroy, her greedy mentor. The setting for the fifth installment takes place a few days later and is played out through the eyes of Lara's acquaintances, foes and friends who have gotten together to reminisce about their encounters with the buxom adventurer. Each person, from her butler to Pierre, recall an adventure they had with Lara, which you get to play out. Each recounting is its own self-contained story/episode and is comprised of four levels. There will be a total of 16 levels when all is said and done. The cool thing is, each of these levels will represent a unique setting and gameplay element. One episode will be a throw back to Tomb 1, whereas another will play more like Metal Gear Solid, as Lara will have to sneak through a high-tech building without being detected. While the game still uses the same engine as last year's model, Lara will have even more moves at her disposal, including the ability to walk across tight ropes and use poles and objects to vault herself up to otherwise unreachable levels.

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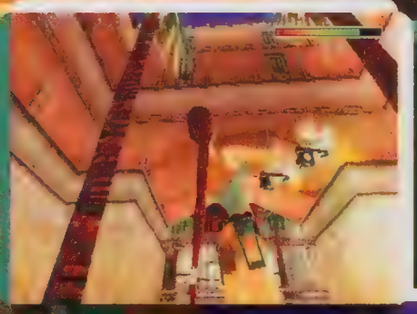


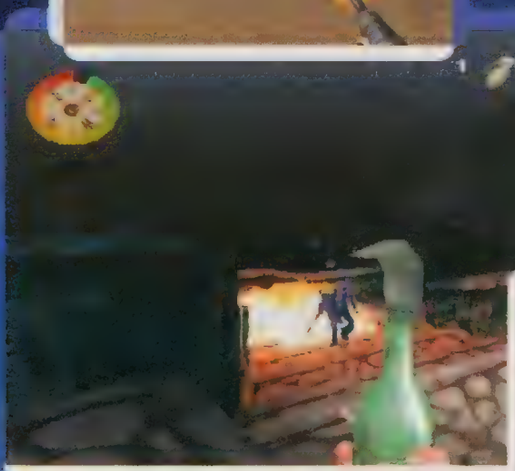
Key Features

- Unique storyline with each adventure being retold by an old friend/foe
- Four new adventures/episodes totalling 16 levels
- New moves and costumes for Lara
- Each episode has its own new game mechanic
- Levels range from German Sub Facility to High-Tech High Rise

Genre
Publisher
Developer
Release Date October 00

Medal of Honor Underground

In the original Medal of Honor, you were given vital information from French Resistance fighter Manon as she helped you succeed in your missions for the OSS. With MoH: Underground, you travel back in time as Manon and lead her from her beginnings in the Resistance through her recruitment by the OSS, in order to help thwart the German onslaught. Armed with an arsenal of new weapons, you'll battle tanks, half-tracks, and Gestapo thugs across Europe and North Africa. New to Underground is the addition of fighting with the aid of Resistance partners who will go off on their own, fight alongside you and even back you up in the heat of battle. In addition, there are a multitude of new weapons to utilize, including Anti-Tank Bazookas, Molotav Cocktails and lethal, one-shot Crossbows. There are also enemy vehicles in the game, such as motorcycles and tanks, daytime missions, the ability to disguise yourself in order to infiltrate Nazi strongholds, enhanced enemy AI (they can actually catch your grenades and lob them back at you), and an incredible cinematic musical score. Like the first MoH, Underground is a quality effort through and through and should please fans of the first immensely.



Key Features

- Seven missions featuring over 22 levels throughout Europe and North Africa
- 12 authentic weapons, including the Big Joe Crossbow and Panzer Faust Anti-Tank Bazooka
- The addition of enemy vehicles, including tanks, half-tracks and motorcycles
- New enhanced enemy AI
- Fellow agents fight alongside Manon

DONALD DUCK
GOIN' QUACKERS

Daisy Duck, the world-famous reporter, is kidnapped while on special assignment to discover what danger is going on inside Merlock's ancient temple. Will Donald, her long-time admirer, be able to save her before she falls into the clutches of Merlock the evil magician, or will his cousin, Gladstone, get to her first? As Disney's most grumpy cartoon character, you'll run amuck, go berserk and get hyper in this hilarious PlayStation quest to rescue Daisy, with each turn bringing a new element of surprise. As Donald, you'll kick, punch and butt bounce your way through 24 levels of 3D action/platforming in a beautiful yet hostile cartoon world. Using a hybrid of the Rayman 2 engine, Goin Quackers challenges players to revive their old-school play mechanics and run, jump and fight their way through a variety of Crash Bandicoot-style 3D levels. One of the most unique features in the game revolves around Donald's explosive tempers. As you encounter enemies, take damage and pick up power-ups, Donald's mood will vary from happy to berserk, with the controls being affected in the process. Knowing when and how to utilize Donald's moods will be half the battle.

Genre	Action/Platform
Publisher	[illegible]
Developer	[illegible]
Release Date	November 00

KEY FEATURES

- Disney-esque, cartoon-like 3D graphics
- Donald's unmistakable voice and sound effects
- All of the trademark Donald characters — Huey, Dewy, Loiue, Daisy, etc...
- 5 worlds comprised of 24 levels
- Old-school, action/platform game mechanics
- Donald's moods add twist to gameplay — Berserk, Happy, Angry and Hyper

Genre	Action/Adventure
Publisher	[illegible]
Developer	Rebellion
Release Date	November 00

THE MUMMY

Konami's The Mummy is based on last year's special effects bonanza starring Brendan Frasier. The game, which plays and looks like a kiddie version of Tomb Raider, pits you as the cavalier treasure hunter who is willing to brave the curse of the mummy in order to grab the gold and get the girl. Targeted toward younger males, ages 8-14, the game presents action/adventure style gameplay that is skewed a bit easier than most games in the genre. The action in The Mummy is limited to attacking/shooting, solving basic, switch-based puzzles, and collecting plenty of loot. Holding these sequences together are a variety of in-game cut scenes featuring all of the cast from the movie. Some of the features in the game include a variety of arcade-style sequences (riding a stone down a lava flow, running for your life from a horde of flesh-eating scarab beetles), a host of close and long range weapons (fists, torches, dual pistols, magic scepters, etc.), tons of secret alcoves and hidden passageways, and voice-overs for the main characters from sound-alike actors. Developed by Rebellion (of Alien vs. Predator for the Jaguar fame), The Mummy (along with The Grinch and Woody Woodpecker Racing) is yet another licensed-based product brought in by the Universal partnership.

KEY FEATURES

- Developed for a younger demographic — boys age 8-14
- Based on last year's blockbuster movie
- Features an edited version of the movie's opening scene
- Includes bonuses and extras, including the trailer for The Mummy 2
- Developed by Rebellion of Alien vs Predator fame (Atari Jaguar)
- In game cut-scenes featuring voice-overs from sound-alike actors

BY MARK ANDROVICH

Genre	Action/Adventure
Publisher	Activision
Developer	Neversoft
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

SPIDERMAN

I've always believed that certain comic book characters would do well starring in videogames, but nearly every developer has tried to prove me wrong. Our "Tin" rating section is full of superhero games such as Batman Forever, Fantastic Four, Judge Dredd, Spawn, and The Incredible Hulk. For whatever reason, comic book characters haven't fared well on the PlayStation. Until now!

Why has Neversoft succeeded where so many have failed? For one thing, they've bucked the modern trend of making their characters "darker" and more realistic looking. Spiderman's world is a cartoon, and he and his larger-than-life villains are decked out unapologetically in bright body-suits fighting in a sanitized version of the Big Apple. The developers have also managed to include everything that defines the character, starting with a storyline that includes Mary Jane, J. Jonah Jameson, Marvel heroes such as Daredevil and The Human Torch, and several notable enemies such as Dr. Octopus, Rhino, and Venom. Spiderman has all of his powers, of course: super-strength, spider sense to warn him of danger, wall crawling, and the ability to shoot webs which he uses to cocoon the bad guys or swing between buildings. You can find special costumes, collect real-life comic book covers which can later be viewed in a gallery, and listen to bios of the characters as read by creator Stan Lee himself. The developers have even included a version of the old Saturday morning cartoon's theme song! If there is anything important to the Spiderman mythos which has been left out, I sure can't think of it.

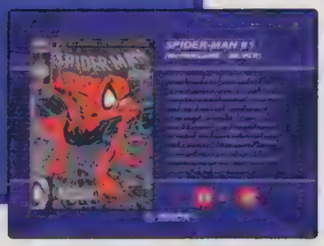
Most importantly, the designers have recognized the limitations of the hardware and haven't tried to do much more than the PlayStation is capable of. Fogging effects keep players from seeing the streets far below the rooftops they are web-swinging between. To keep Spiderman from becoming obscured, objects between him and the game's camera — such as items he is carrying, walls, and ceilings — turn transparent. He never encounters more than a trio of henchmen at the same time, lest the framerate slow to a crawl. Nevertheless, the simple look of the game, and its relative ease, fit the comic book style perfectly. Animated cut-scenes, voice-overs by the cast of the Fox television cartoon, and glue screens featuring comic book art and Spiderman logos add to this atmosphere. At no time during the game did I stop and think to myself: "This isn't what Spiderman would do!" That's more than I can say for almost every other superhero game to date.

As you progress through the game's storyline, you'll encounter different styles of play. Outside, you'll climb up the sides of buildings and use your web to swing from one to the other (just between you and me, what the heck are the webs attached to anyway?). Enemies encountered on rooftops must be taken care of, using either your hands and feet or Spiderman's webbing. Once inside the buildings, you can crawl across the ceiling while bad guys remain oblivious to your presence. Puzzles generally involve pushing the correct switches to open doors, and there are several "chase" sequences which require you to pursue the bad guys. If you fall too far behind, you'll have to start over. Super villains present special challenges, and their weaknesses must be deduced from trial and error. You must lead Rhino, for example, to charge into barrels and transformers. Should you fail in your task, you will be given an infinite amount of restarts from the last checkpoint.

I suppose that is my main complaint. With unlimited continues, you merely try one thing after another until you figure out the correct path. In that way, Spiderman is similar to Abe's Oddysey, which required you to "run the gauntlet" over and over until the solution finally dawned on you. The game is slightly on the easy side, even on the normal difficulty setting, and that isn't even counting the "kids mode" which simplifies the controls. Most people will be able to get through the game fairly quickly, and in the event that you do get stuck, the infinite continues ensure that you will persevere.

The camera is occasionally unhelpful, as you'll have to wait for it to keep up with you when you change directions abruptly. Unfortunately, since you can crawl on almost every surface, this happens frequently. Thankfully, after some initial disorientation, you'll soon adapt to crawling upside down. The designers have wisely provided a web targeting mode which helps you travel from the sides of one object to another no matter your relative position to the ground. Spiderman also has a web-to-ceiling zip line which can help him get out of tight spots. Fighting is simple with the punch and kick buttons, although there are a few collision detection problems, and you can also perform combination moves in connection with the web line.

Aside from the ceiling crawling and web swinging, which looks darn cool, there really isn't anything in Spiderman that hasn't been done before. Underneath all the trappings is a straightforward arcade-style action game which plays a lot like a combination of Fighting Force and One. Although the individual action sequences aren't too original, few games have put the pieces together quite as well and no other game delivers the whole action/adventure package within a comic book universe as Spiderman does.



BOTTOM LINE

It's about time that someone made a superhero game that wasn't a 2D punch-and-kick game or a 3D mess! With colorful characters and villains, a jammin' soundtrack, good voice acting, and lots of extras, this is as close as you'll ever get to playing a comic book. Not spectacular or amazing, but definitely friendly.

SCORE:

84%

PSE2 Editor's Choice Gold

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

By Gary Strassberg

Parasite Eve 2

Genre	Action/Adventure
Publisher	Square EA
Developer	Squaresoft
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	2
Available	NOW!

In case you've never had the demented pleasure of playing Parasite Eve, the popular sci-fi RPG featured endearing characters, eerie visuals and a completely unique premise all wrapped up in a realistic urban environment.

Playing as New York City Police Detective Aya Brea, gamers suddenly found themselves mixed up in the middle of a strange and deadly genetic threat to humanity. Only Aya had the power to stop the evil Mitochondrian creatures that were intent on taking over Manhattan, and the game provided many intense hours of entertainment as the suspenseful story unfolded.

Now, three years after the near-disaster in New York City, Aya is finally returning — this time, to battle an even deadlier breed of Neo-Mitochondrian Creatures (NMC's) in Parasite Eve 2. And, as you can already tell from the rating at the bottom of the page, this highly anticipated title is definitely worth the wait.

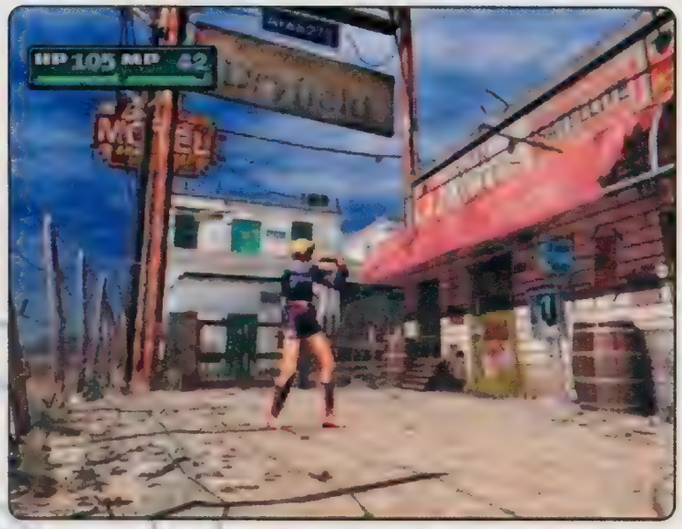
The new story begins in Los Angeles, where Aya has joined a federal task force dedicated to hunting NMC's that appeared out west after her battle in the Big Apple. Soon, Aya's search takes her to the desolate town of Dryfield in Nevada's Mohave Desert, where she begins to unravel a mystery that leads to a secret underground base in the middle of the barren wasteland.

In the course of her adventure, Aya has to battle a hair-raising horde of menacing monsters that come in all kinds of bizarre shapes and sizes, including a number of huge bosses that are quite challenging to destroy. The variety of creatures is as impressive as it is creepy, with all kinds of cool animations and special attacks that make the danger seem extremely real. If you thought the first game was exciting, just wait until you play the sequel!

Fortunately, Squaresoft was listening when fans of the first game grumbled about the long, drawn-out fights and far-too-frequent random battles. This time, the game is much more action-oriented, having eliminated many of the RPG elements that bogged down the gameplay. For instance, Aya's boring attack bar and translucent targeting dome are gone, so the fights primarily occur in real-time, rather than being turn-based. As a result, you no longer have to run around evading attacks until Aya is able to strike back. Instead, just point your weapon at a target and blast away!

In fact, the only times the action ever pauses during battle are when Aya switches weapons, uses an item, or employs her unique Parasite Energy powers. Doing the latter brings up a variety of targeting outlines that illustrate the range of the different powers, which include Healing, Antibody, Necrosis, Energy Shot, Plasma, Combustion and several others. These abilities can be gained and strengthened by trading in Aya's Experience Points, and her Bounty Points can be used to purchase new weapons, ammo, armor and a host of helpful items. The cumbersome weapons-upgrading system from the first game is also history, although there's still plenty of impressive firepower available.

But wait — things get even better. The game also includes a great map feature that not only shows you every room, door and telephone — it also offers helpful clues and shows you which areas have monsters in them! So, if you don't feel like fighting because Aya is injured, simply pick another route. On the other hand, the more monsters you destroy, the more Bounty Points you can get to beef up your arsenal, which is essential for long-term survival.



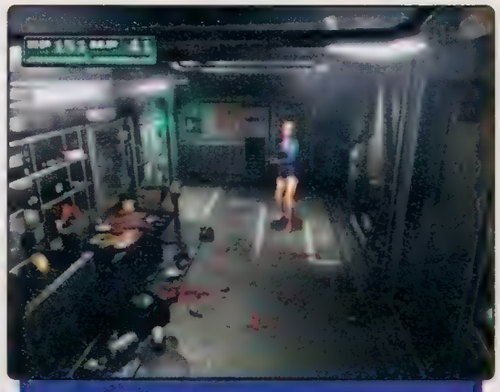
MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Of course, PE2 isn't just about fighting — it's also about exploring vast environments, solving mysterious puzzles and riddles, and interacting with a cast of strange characters. Still, there's no denying that the sequel obviously emphasizes action over the RPG elements.

Okay, so the gameplay has been given a welcome shot of adrenalin, but what about the presentation? Well, if the first game looked pretty sweet, the sequel is truly dressed to kill, offering slick, cinematic visuals that are even more riveting than the original. The pre-rendered backgrounds are beautifully detailed, with plenty of realistic reflections and lighting effects, and numerous CG sequences are cleverly integrated into the presentation, adding to the movie-like feel.

But despite all the praise, PE2 isn't quite perfect. Some may lament that the gameplay is more linear than the original, or that the story sometimes seems to take a backseat to the action. It also would have been nice to give Aya a quick-turn move like you see in other "survival horror" games. All are valid points to consider.

However, these issues are easily overlooked once you become immersed in the suspenseful experience. From the cool opening scene at the FBI target range to the ultimate showdown at the end of the game, Parasite Eve 2 is an extremely polished sequel that is truly worth savoring.



Score:

PSE2 Editor's Choice Platinum

98%

Bottom Line

PE2 is an excellent game in almost every respect, whether you are a serious fan of the original or completely new to the series. Top-notch graphics and chilling sound effects set the mood perfectly, and the gameplay is more exciting than ever, with plenty of evil monsters to battle. Don't miss this fight for survival!

Compatibility

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

BY MARK ANDROVICH

Genre	Puzzle
Publisher	Namco
Developer	Namco
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

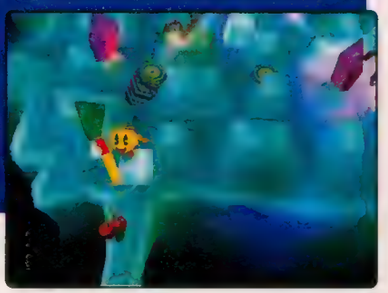
MS. PAC MAN: MAZE MADNESS

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Although the original Pac-Man was a good game, most gamers will admit that Ms. Pac-Man did him one better with multiple mazes, mobile snacks, and better "intermission" scenes. PlayStation versions of both of these arcade classics can already be found on the Namco Museum disks, but last year Namco also released "Pac-Man World: 20th Anniversary." Along with a classic and 3D version of the original game, the highlight of Pac-Man World was a "quest" mode where you got to take our favorite round yellow hero through 3D environments: butt-stomping and throwing pellets at various enemies in themed worlds.

Proving that behind every good Pac-Man is a Pac-Woman, Namco has followed up last year's game with Ms. Pac-Man: Maze Madness. The quest mode has been retooled, however, and no longer plays like a platform game. You can't swim, spin, or butt-bounce. In fact, the action buttons are not used at all, except to zoom the camera in and out. Instead, Maze Madness plays like a puzzle game similar to a 3D Chip's Challenge (if you remember that old Lynx/Windows game). There is still a lot of "dot eating" going on, but our heroine has also got to collect keys to open doors, explode TNT crates, use spring-loaded pads, and push blocks to help her avoid obstacles and reach the goal.

The action takes place in several different worlds with themes such as Egyptian pyramids, ice caves, a haunted castle, and the Orient. The enemies are different in each world, and the ghosts don different hats, but the play mechanics remain the same. You've got to collect the dots, use power pills to turn the tables on the pursuing ghosts, and push blocks and switches to clear a path to the exit. Unlike the original arcade game, Ms. Pac-Man can stand in place and she doesn't "die" after a single hit. Instead, she has a life meter which is depleted by contact with ghosts, enemies, and other hazards (and which can be refilled by locating hearts). The ghosts themselves wander around in seemingly-random patterns which even Billy Mitchell wouldn't be able to fathom. The game still feels like Ms. Pac-Man, but barely.

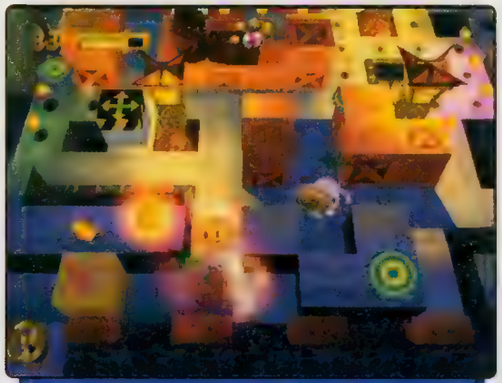


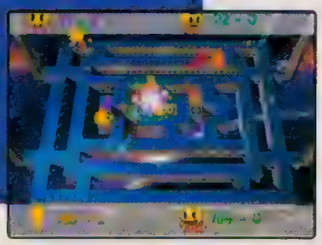
Fans of the arcade game will appreciate the fact that Namco has also included a version of the original on the disk. New to MPM:MM is a multiplayer mode which allows up to four players to compete in three different events. Dot Mania awards the first player to eat 80 dots while avoiding computer-controlled ghosts. Power-ups give players the ability to speed up, leave a trail of fire, grow big, and otherwise overpower all opponents (both ghosts and fellow members of the Pac). Ghost Tag requires you to eat 50 dots while avoiding ghosts who are controlled by the other players. If you are "tagged" by a ghost, you switch places: that player becomes a Pac character and you must chase them. Rounding out the multiplayer experience is "Da Bomb," which plays like a game of hot potato. A timer above your head counts down to zero, but if you tag another player you'll transfer the timer to him or her instead. You don't want to be "it" when the timer goes off!

You can play as any of the regular Pac characters in the multiplayer game, along with hidden characters such as a Pooka, and there are four specially-designed mazes to choose from. Unfortunately, this mode is not without its difficulties. The camera stays high above the playing field to show all the characters at once, so the mazes are not very complex and the characters are vastly oversized. You cannot walk through or around other players either, which leads to moments of confusion when the characters arrive in the same corner all at once. Even so, the multiplayer game is fun for awhile and it is always a good thing when designers add a multiplayer component to a game which is meant to be a solo contest.

My main complaint about Pac-Man World concerned the ease at which Pac-Man fell off the playing field and the difficulty in performing certain moves without getting stuck on background obstacles. The camera was also not very helpful in some areas. In Maze Madness, your movement is restricted to horizontal and vertical pathways, which obviates both of these concerns. Unfortunately, without the quest mode, the game loses some of the depth that Pac-Man World had. The designers have included bonus rounds, which must be unlocked by earning stars for finding all the fruits or eating all the dots, but some of these rounds are very strange and don't fit in with the rest of the game. There is replay value in a time trial mode that lets you to run through simplified versions of each level, but even then the game grows thin sooner than Pac-Man World.

It seems that the designers didn't have much choice. If they merely added a bow and lipstick to the hero of their Pac-Man World game, and changed the look of the levels, they would be criticized for making an unnecessary sequel. So they kept the essential "Pac" elements — the pursuing ghosts, the dot munching, the fruit, and the carnival atmosphere — and made a puzzle game out of it instead. As a puzzler, Maze Madness is a recommended game (and my rating reflects this), but it isn't as memorable as its predecessor.





BOTTOM LINE

It has taken nearly 10 years, but Pac-Man has finally gotten even with the misses! While Maze Madness is an entertaining puzzle game, it doesn't have the same level of originality as Pac-Man World.

SCORE:

80%

PSE2 Editors' Choice Gold

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players | Multi Tap Adaptable 1-4 Players | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

TENCHU 2: BIRTH OF THE ASSASSINS

Genre	Action/Adventure
Publisher	Activision
Developer	[illegible]
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

Two years ago, shortly before Metal Gear Solid was released to critical acclaim, I reviewed a game called Tenchu. I enjoyed it immensely, thanks to the well-crafted atmosphere of feudal Japan and, more importantly, the element of stealth involved. For the first time, your character actually had to act like a ninja. Instead of running through levels slashing at enemies, you were required to blend into the shadows waiting patiently for an opening to sneak up on an opponent. The game featured interesting gadgets, some frightening enemies, and a decent storyline.

Tenchu was not without its faults, however. The voice acting was poor, and even though the U.S. release added two new missions from the original Japanese version, it was still fairly short. Above all, the camera performed erratically in cramped environments. Still, there was just something cool about the game.

The wait for a sequel has been long, but it is finally over. Tenchu 2 is actually a prequel that deals with the early years of Rikimaru and Ayame and a more senior ninja named Tatsumaru. Like the original, Tenchu 2 features training levels and a series of ten missions which can be played by either of the two characters (and by Tatsumaru once you have first completed the game with the others). Depending upon which character you choose, the missions vary slightly and the storyline unfolds differently. Cool ninja items such as shuriken, caltrops, and a grappling hook return, and once again you have a Ki Meter which determines how close you are to opponents and whether or not they are aware of your presence.

No sequel would be complete without additional moves, and Tenchu 2 is no exception. The characters can now swim and even hide under the water using the old "bamboo snorkel" trick. The bodies of victims can be searched and dragged around so they won't be discovered. There is also a super jump move to cross larger gaps. The graphics have been improved slightly, with some nice lighting and weather effects, although your surroundings still fade into view. Fortunately, the look fits fine with the nighttime and fog-shrouded daylight settings of the missions.

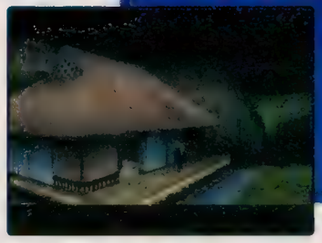
The enemies are about as intelligent (or unintelligent) as in the prior game, which means that if you remain motionless you can stay undetected, even when it appears that they are looking right at you. For the most part, they walk pre-programmed paths unless they hear a noise or see you moving. They are also incapable of following your character when he or she climbs up a cliff or on a roof to escape. As in Metal Gear Solid, whenever an alerted enemy doesn't find you within a certain amount of time, he or she goes back to their business. After each mission, you'll receive a rating which takes into account how many times you were spotted (bad) and how many enemies you were able to kill silently (good).

Other than the few new moves and the addition of analog support, the action is pretty much the same as in the original game, although the volume of spilled blood seemed higher somehow. The voice acting is once again poor, and the camera movement, while improved, is still not perfect. If the game was limited to only to these improvements, I would rate it just slightly higher than the original (I gave Tenchu an 89%, but in retrospect think it deserved a 90%). What elevates the sequel even higher into the Gold range? One very important new addition: a mission editor.

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mission editors are more common in the world of computer gaming, thanks to hard drives and floppy disks which facilitate their use. They aren't so common in console games, being generally limited to rudimentary track editors for racing games. That's about to change, because Tenchu 2's system is one of the easiest and most comprehensive I've ever seen. For starters, you can select from six different mission goals which feature characters and items unique to that mission. The general assortment of enemies and noncombatants differ according to the environment. Depending upon your progress in the main game, the mission editor allows you to select from settings such as a mountain, village, castle, or dojo. As you might expect, the terrain differs accordingly. The castle environment features elements such as pillars, Kimono racks, straw mats and suits of armor, whereas the mountain environment provides for waterfalls, rocks, and trees. You can decide whether or not stealth is required, and you can also create a time limit if so desired. It is a simple matter to lay out all the terrain elements and characters on a 32 x 32 grid, which can be rotated and viewed at different magnification levels. You can enter the created levels to test them and, once you're satisfied with your creation, you can save it to a memory card. Player-created levels don't quite match the size and detail of the main game, but they come very close!

One drawback with the main game, and most action/adventure games of this type, is that you'll eventually memorize the location of items, the best places to hide, and the paths of the enemies. Thanks to the mission editor, Tenchu 2 will have a longer shelf life: you'll want to return to it over and over again to create your own levels.



SCORE:

PSE2 EDITOR'S CHOICE GOLD

93%

BOTTOM LINE

Although it isn't nearly as polished as Metal Gear Solid, fans of action/adventure games who appreciate the element of stealth will enjoy this title. The mission editor takes the game to a whole new level, allowing to create your own missions with a variety of customizable elements.

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

BY MARK ANDROVICH

Genre	Action/Adventure
Publisher	Fox Interactive
Developer	Argonaut
Origin	UK
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

ALIEN RESURRECTION

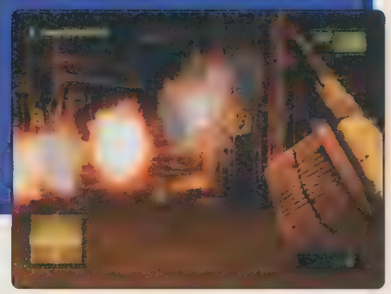
MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

In space, no one can hear you scream. On the other hand, I'm sure you could have heard a lot of screaming as the developers struggled to complete this title. Alien Resurrection was originally scheduled for release in 1998, shortly after the film on which it was based, and was to be a third-person action/adventure. For the past few years it has languished in "development hell," a place where a lot of good game ideas go but few escape intact. It has now emerged as a first-person shooter, similar in some respects to the original Alien Trilogy game from 1996. Judging by the final version, the developers made the right choice; you just can't create the same level of tension or suspense from a third-person view.

In case you missed the movies, the story goes something like this; In the future, human beings have colonized vast regions of space. One chance encounter led to the discovery of a horrifying alien creature that starts its life by being implanted inside a human body, bursting forth through the host's chest after it gestates. Once grown, the creature develops sharp claws, two sets of jaws with razor-sharp teeth, a spiked tail, and acid for blood. Needless to say, they don't make nice pets!

One woman, Ellen Ripley, survived three encounters with the creatures and ultimately sacrificed her life after learning that she had been impregnated by one of them. Scientists seeking to recreate the alien species used Ripley's DNA to clone her, managing to separate the embryo from her body in the process. Of course, the experiments have gone wrong, and now both the aliens and Ripley are free. You've got to escape from the ship, which is on a collision course with Earth, destroying as many aliens as you can in the process.

Although the vast majority of the game finds you taking the role of Ellen Ripley, there are three other playable characters from the film. Although some of them have weapons not available to the others, since the control scheme is the same for all of them (and as you never see your on-screen character anyway), the multiple characters seem superfluous.

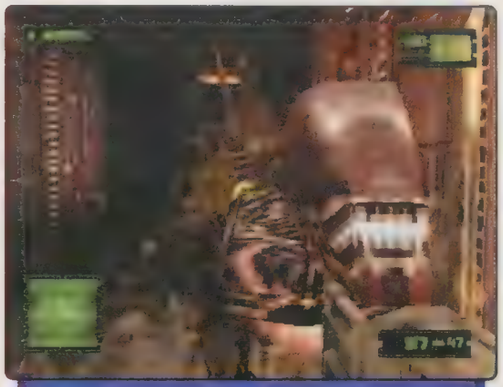


Fans of first-person shooters will immediately notice that the developers deliberately slowed down the pace from Doom, Quake, and other similar games. Since you can never run fast enough to escape from your pursuers, the game forces you to carefully explore your surroundings instead of just running forward blindly into confrontations. I expected that the slower pace would lead to a wider variety of missions or more challenging puzzles, but this was not the case. As with Doom and Quake, the only puzzles involve finding key cards or pushing buttons to open doors.

Taking a cue from Medal of Honor, Alien Resurrection relies heavily on ambient sounds to craft a palpable atmosphere. The developers have wisely dropped the soundtrack, leaving you with only the creaks and groans of the ship, the breathing of hidden aliens, the pitter-patter of crawling facehuggers, beeping computers, and the screams of far-away victims. Along with the sounds, there are a lot of scripted events that add to the atmosphere. You'll look over a balcony railing to see two Marines running by, followed seconds later by an Alien in pursuit. Throughout the game you'll also interrupt a few pitched battles, turn a corner and run head-on into a screaming human, and peer through windows to name a few. The game's inhabitants seem to be constantly in motion around you, so you'll never feel as if the game is waiting for your input. Instead, it is as if you have been dropped into the middle of a living world.

Now, for the bad news. Although the game's universe carefully mirrors the look of the film, the movie license becomes more of a limitation than an asset. In most first-person shooters, you face a wide variety of imaginative enemies. Here, we are limited primarily to two forms of the alien — the facehugger and the adult — with a few Marines thrown in for good measure. The Queen Alien and Newborn are "boss" characters you'll only encounter briefly. While it is true that Medal of Honor managed to be a great game even though its enemies were limited to Nazi soldiers, its success was due to the wide variety of missions. Some involved subterfuge instead of mere shooting, and the levels didn't all look alike. Alien Resurrection can't provide that same kind of depth since the action takes place on board a spaceship. Even though each level does have something unique about it, the environments are so large that many elements (hallways, doors, elevators) are repeated frequently. It is easy to get lost, and many of the levels give you the feeling that you've seen them before.

The game also isn't as terrifying as it might have been. The first film featured only a single creature, but audiences were scared because they didn't know what it was, where it was, or when it would strike next. In the subsequent films, there were dozens of these creatures who served primarily as cannon fodder. There was more action, to be sure, but less suspense. Obviously, no videogame would work with just a single alien, but Alien Resurrection features so many aliens roaming around that it loses much of its potential to scare players. There are a few tense moments, but most of the confrontations are "in your face" action.



BOTTOM LINE

There is not enough level variety or character interaction to create a cinematic game like Medal of Honor, and not enough speed or action to be a Quake-styled contest. I wish they had gone one way or the other. While this is a good game which will appeal to fans of the movies and shooters in general, it isn't as inspired as it should be.

SCORE:

87%

SILVER

COMPATIBILITY

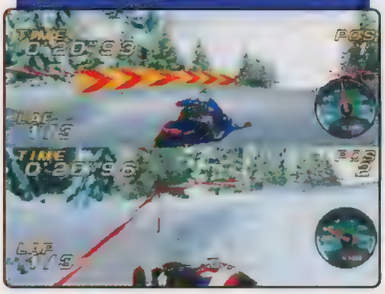
1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

BY MARK ANDROVICH

SNO CROSS CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Crave
Developer	UDS
Origin	Sweden
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



Last year's Sled Storm is one of my favorite PlayStation racing games. I was hoping that EA would add it to the company's group of franchises, right beside Road Rash and Need for Speed. So far it hasn't, but Crave's Sno-Cross Championship Racing is so similar that it could almost be mistaken for Sled Storm 2K.

Sno-Cross features seven different tracks from around the globe, with the ability to race each track during the day or at night and in three different types of weather — clear, rain, or snow. There are a total of 12 different snowmobiles, although many of them are locked initially, and you can upgrade each vehicle's tracks, skis, engine, front suspension, and back suspension with the cash you win from racing in the championship. Aside from the championship mode, there is also a single race and a time trial mode. You can view the action from one of four different camera positions, including a dizzying first-person view.

Graphically, Sno-Cross is a little rough around the edges. It is likely that the designers had to sacrifice polygon count in order to keep the game moving at a decent speed. So, although the snowmobiles do move fast, the riders appear a bit angular. The sleds themselves look nice, but the rider animation (when getting thrown or performing tricks) is choppy. The courses feature a lot of nice details, however, such as gondolas, trains, and airplanes that pass overhead, and lots of spectators, buildings, and trees adjoining the course. Unlike Sled Storm, there aren't any secret paths to find or fun things to run over (like jackrabbits and snowmen). It isn't that the courses are poorly designed, but none of them really stand out.

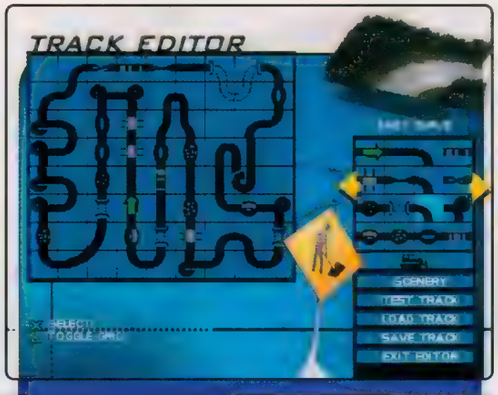
Unfortunately, as with Sled Storm, you can't see very far into the distance. The course fades into view as you move forward. An overhead map would have been greatly appreciated, but the designers chose instead to display a tachometer and a vehicle damage chart. With such a limited field of view and without an overhead map, you have little time to react. The game therefore quickly becomes a matter of memorizing the upcoming turns. Sno-Cross doesn't show you the relative positions of the other riders during a race either. You have no idea how far ahead of you the opponents are, although you can hit the "look back" button to see if anyone is right behind you.

Speaking of opponents, my main complaint is that the AI is too advanced. Computer-controlled riders did crash occasionally, but the majority of the time they were able to beat me off the starting line and never look back. They could overtake me easily going up a hill, and even when I ran a flawless lap or two I found it nearly impossible to narrow the gap between myself and the leader. It is pretty easy to obtain third place once you get the hang of the controls, and you might also come in second (if the computer opponents crash and you make no mistakes). Unfortunately, while you can continue with the championship races by placing third, you cannot unlock other courses until you win first place overall, which is a very difficult task. Beating the computer is nearly impossible unless you upgrade your snowmobile significantly — and, of course, you won't earn enough money to buy the best upgrades until after you win a lot of races.

Sno-Cross also allows players to perform tricks during a race to earn extra cash. The problem is, the majority of them are difficult to pull off without crashing. The incentive just isn't there: you might be able to earn $20 by performing a "no hands" move, but you'll lose a lot more money than that if you crash during the attempt and drop down in the standings.

Despite its general similarity to Sled Storm, there are a few areas in which SCCR comes up short. I still marvel at how EA was able to allow three and four-player split-screen racing. I didn't expect SCCR to do likewise, and it doesn't (although it does have a two-player contest). EA was also able to afford a soundtrack featuring Rob Zombie, Econoline Crush, and others, whereas Crave's game has more generic background music. It didn't matter to me — I prefer to hear the whine of the engines instead — but it might be a big deal to you.

Sno-Cross does have one impressive distinguishing feature — a track editor. Yeah, we've heard it before. Many racing games have allowed you to create your own tracks, but they all had shortcomings. Some editors limited you to a single nondescript background, others wouldn't let you race against anyone else on the tracks you created, and still others required hours of time (and an entire memory card) to get any decent results. Sno-Cross lets you create tracks in minutes, using a set of pre-fabricated pieces. There are two sets of scenery, each with 20 different pieces, which can be arranged on a 9 x 8 grid. To give you an idea of the scale, I created a course that used all 72 of the grid spaces: it took me nearly four minutes to complete a single lap. User-created tracks don't take up any extra memory card space and, best of all, you can race these courses against an opponent or in the time trial mode.



SCORE:

SILVER

89%

BOTTOM LINE

Although very similar to Sled Storm, Sno-Cross doesn't offer 3-4 player racing and its courses are nowhere near as inventive. For that reason, along with the less impressive graphics, this game is a close second. However, the track editor is definitely worth a look.

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

BY GARY STRASSBERG

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Acclaim Studios
Origin	Uk
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

RC REVENGE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Acclaim received a lot of criticism last year for the woefully mediocre Re-Volt, which simply didn't do justice to the concept of racing radio-controlled ("RC") cars on the PlayStation. In fact, the game barely squeaked into our Bronze category with a lowly 71% rating, because it was so darn disappointing.

Now, the publisher is striking back with RC Revenge — but this time, let's give credit where credit is due. Unlike Re-Volt, which was totally lame, Acclaim's new RC racer is a vastly improved game with fantastic graphics, superb track designs, responsive controls and plenty of interesting spins that definitely make this title worth playing.

Players start off with a choice of nine different vehicles that are rated on speed, acceleration and handling. Plus, there are six others that can be unlocked during the course of the game, including a police car, a bulldozer and a UFO! As if that isn't enough, each vehicle also turns into a boat so you can race on the many waterways that are cleverly incorporated into the track designs. This adds a lot of variety to the gameplay, since some tracks are all land-based, others are totally on water, and several combine both. Your car automatically morphs back and forth whenever you switch from a land route to a water route, or vice-versa. So, it's up to you to find the fastest way around each track and discover all of the secret shortcuts if you want to win. How cool is that?

Of course, racing is only part of the gameplay — combat is another aspect that you'll have to master in order to reach the finish line first. There's a modest variety of weapons and power-ups that you'll need in order to compete, ranging from bombs and oil slicks to missiles and electricity. No, the weapons aren't especially innovative, but they are very well-integrated into the gameplay and make the action even more fun and challenging. Since players can only pick up one weapon or power-up at a time, using it strategically and timing things just right are crucial to your success.

The different modes of play include Championship, Single Race, Time Trial and Multiplayer Race. The Championship mode is broken down into bronze, silver, gold and platinum categories, and beating each one opens up the next, as well as additional tracks and secret vehicles. The options menu lets you change the number of laps and opponents in the race, but it would have been nice to also give players an adjustable difficulty setting, since the competition is pretty tough. In fact, until you learn the secrets of each track, it's extremely challenging to break away from the pack and develop a lead. And even if you do get ahead, it's still possible to get wiped out by a weapon just a few inches from the finish line, so you can never become complacent if you want to win.

The controls are much tighter than Re-Volt's and the vehicles handle very realistically. There's even a handy button for making sharp, hand-brake turns. Combined with the excellent vibration feedback and the authentic sound effects, you really feel like you're driving a radio-controlled car.

As far as graphics go, the visuals are also a lot better than Re-Volt's, with a variety of impressive lighting and water effects to complement the colorful and imaginative track designs. Courses are set in the jungle, a huge mansion, outer space, a creepy crypt and other creative locales, and there are always multiple routes you can take. The frame-rate is pretty smooth and consistent throughout, with only an occasional hiccup and very minimal draw-in, but nothing to be concerned about.

RC Revenge is already light years ahead of its predecessor in every respect, but its easy-to-use track editor is truly the icing on the cake. This feature lets you quickly build a custom course by placing different pieces of track in a grid, and then save it to a memory card to race by yourself or with a friend. There are plenty of jumps, tunnels, hills and other hazards to choose from, although the number of pieces you can place is limited by memory.

Compared to the seriously flawed Re-Volt, the game's list of shortcomings is remarkably brief. As previously mentioned, it would have been nice to let players set the level of difficulty, but at least you can lower your number of foes if you so desire. More weapons and power-ups also would have been welcome, and it would have been cool to let you carry more than one at a time, like Rollcage. But aside from these minor issues, RC Revenge is an incredibly fun and original racing game that's well worth savoring. It definitely goes a long way toward erasing the revolting memories left by Re-Volt in the minds of many gamers.

BOTTOM LINE

RC Revenge makes up for Re-Volt's many flaws by delivering crisp, colorful graphics, a consistent framerate, imaginative track designs and tight controls. The racing and combat are nicely balanced, and the high challenge level is fun, but never frustrating. Plus, the excellent track editor and the multiplayer mode offer plenty of replay value.

SCORE:

92%

PSE2 EDITORS' CHOICE GOLD

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

ACTION BASS

Genre	Fishing
Publisher	Take 2 Interactive
Developer	Syscom Entertainment
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

I don't know how this game slipped past the desk of Alex Andrews, our resident fishing game expert, but it somehow found its way to me. Perhaps it had to do with his running away screaming at the sight of another PlayStation case with a fish on the cover. In any event, I re-read all of his fishing game reviews from the past four years (It could have been worse: I might have had to re-read Darien's RPG reviews).

Does any system truly need six fishing games, with a seventh one on the way? Not really, but each one of them has found a niche. Reel Fishing, the oldest of the bunch, impressed us with its digitized environments and featured a virtual aquarium where you could keep your catches. Big Bass World Championship leaned towards the simulation side, while Fisherman's Bait and its sequel, Big Ol' Bass, were arcade-style contests. Bass Landing scored points for its specialized fishing controller, but had a steep learning curve.

So what exactly is the "hook" of Action Bass? Simply this: the $9.99 bargain price. A quick glance at the controller layout will tell you that this game is about as far from a simulation as you can get. Whereas many of the prior games required you to use power and direction meters to cast the line, as well as additional commands to set the hook and reel in, you'll be able to play Action Bass using only a single button. Press X once to cast the line, and again to reel in the fish. Sure, there are buttons for reeling in with greater speed or moving the line, but you don't have to use them. Considering that it took me about two hours to catch my first fish on Reel Fishing, "easy" is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, if I wanted to wait around all day waiting for the fish to bite, I'd rather take a boat out on Lake Natoma than sit in front of my television set.

Forgetting the price for a moment, how does Action Bass measure up against the competition? The game offers four initial locations, with two new ones that can be unlocked. The environments differ from each other, requiring a different type of lure. There are five lures to choose from at the start of the game, with four more unlocked as they progress. As is the case with most fishing games, you can either play in the "Free" mode, without time or weight limits, or in the "Challenge" mode in which you must finish in the top three to move on. And, yes, there is an aquarium to stock your fish (although it looks more like a small pond than a storage tank). The camera switches to a 3D underwater view, and the fish look and move surprisingly accurately. In most respects, therefore, Action Bass is the same as all the fishing games which have come before. It doesn't add anything new, and even though it doesn't have quite as many options, it doesn't leave anything important out.

As you might have guessed from the title, the only fish you get to catch are bass. Unfortunately, this makes the game monotonous. Each fish that strikes looks exactly the same as the last fish. There aren't even any differences in coloring, just in size (which is hard to tell until you've landed them). I didn't like the fact that you have no control over the distance of your casting, nor did I appreciate the limitations on movement. The boat floats left or right within a limited field of view, and your line is always cast straight ahead. There is also a disparity between the environments depicted. Casting in grass under the shade of a tree near the bank results in a view of the rocky bottom, which looks just the same as when you cast under a pier.

These complaints aside, Action Bass is easy to get into since there are no simulation elements involved. Even my four year-old son was able to land a fish once he learned not to let the tension meter get full. At the same time, beating the challenge mode is extremely tough. Catching the larger Bass in each environment is more a matter of luck than skill.

For me, the ideal fishing game would follow the lead of Hot Shots Golf. You could choose from cartoon-style fishermen (or women), each with different attributes. The environments would be colorful and full of arcade-style touches such as alligators that rock the boat or piranhas that devour your catches. Players could earn better lures and poles, and there could even be a two-player deep sea fishing contest in which you try to reel in more tuna than your opponent while a hungry shark swims nearby. But that's just me...

Once again, I applaud Take 2 for making a decent game available under its $9.99 budget line. Sure, Action Bass lacks many of the whistles and bells of the more expensive titles, but the underlying gameplay is still there. A lot of hardcore gamers won't touch fishing games with a ten foot pole, but if you've ever been curious about them, Action Bass is an inexpensive place to start your virtual angling career.

SCORE:

SILVER

80%

BOTTOM LINE

To paraphrase a famous beer commercial (and don't most real-life fishing experiences involve beer?), Action Bass is everything you always wanted in a fishing game... and less. It has fewer environments and lures, and only one type of fish, yet it offers the standard gameplay of fishing titles which cost four times as much.

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

By Gary Strassberg

Genre	Pinball
Publisher	Empire Interactive
Developer	Cunning Developments
Origin	UK
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey & Big Race USA

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Pro Pinball Fantastic Journey and Big Race USA are a pair of new, low-cost pinball simulations from Empire Interactive. For the sake of saving editorial space, I have combined them both into one review. Both games do a pretty competent job of bringing the fun of a pinball machine to your den or living room. The question is, are there enough gamers interested in playing two very similar pinball titles, even if they are priced to move at an affordable $9.99?

In all fairness, both titles have some pretty good things going for them, including sharp, colorful graphics that look extremely realistic — although the visuals in Big Race USA are just a touch more colorful and imaginative. But perhaps that's because Fantastic Journey has a more "serious" theme — players actually have to stop an evil tyrant from taking over the world!

That's right, dear readers, this is no ordinary pinball game. Your mission is to construct four steam-powered contraptions and collect four special crystals in order to stop a mean guy named General Yagov from taking over the world. Each contraption is made out of three parts that you must acquire by employing all of your pinball prowess to hit specific targets. You also need to use your arcade skills to complete four different adventures before you can finally launch a raid on Yagov's mysterious island.

If all of this sounds a bit complicated for a pinball game, don't worry — in both games all you really have to do is shoot the ball at the lit arrows and you will be well underway to getting the high score and becoming a Pinball Wizard.

The balls in Fantastic Journey are a little bigger than the ones in Big Race USA, and the realistic physics reflect this accordingly, as their greater weight seems to carry more momentum. The flippers also look a bit larger and farther apart, and there are only two flippers to play with instead of four, which is what Big Race offers. The result of all this is that the gameplay is slightly more challenging on Fantastic Journey, with less room for error, so you'll have to work even harder to get a high score.

On the plus side, the Fantastic Journey table is clearly laid out and pretty easy to read, whereas the table in Big Race seems a bit busier. Both tabletops also have plenty of moving parts that appear and disappear depending on the progress you make. Plus, they feature all of the colorful lights and arcade sounds players have come to expect from a pinball game, which truly makes the simulation seem authentic. The excellent vibration effects complete the illusion by letting you feel the movement of the flippers and the impact of the ball every time it hits an object. The end result is an accurate representation of pinball that will keep some players hooked for hours.

As previously mentioned, there are many similarities between Fantastic Journey and Big Race USA, as both games obviously have been developed with the same basic format in mind. The options menus are essentially identical, giving players the ability to choose from three table views, six difficulty settings, an adjustable dot matrix display, and whatever custom control scheme you prefer. The slide show mode is also shared by both titles, as is the feature that lets you examine any part of the pinball table up-close-and-personal. And, like Big Race, Fantastic Journey gives each player three balls to start with, and replays can be earned at 100,000,000 points.

In addition, the simple, arcade-style gameplay of both releases can be surprisingly addictive, even if neither of them does anything to truly update or further the pinball genre. Both titles offer a little bit of imagination, but very little innovation, and their relative lack of gameplay depth detracts from the long-term replay value. Don't get the wrong idea — the game is quite challenging, and it is definitely fun for a while. However, working the flippers starts to get a little repetitive after long gaming sessions, and the weird remarks made by the foreign-sounding announcer can become rather annoying. But at least you can turn down the latter in the options menu (thank you!).

If you've read this far into the review, you're probably at least interested by the prospect of playing pinball on your PlayStation. Well, rest assured that both of Empire Interactive's Pro Pinball titles do the game justice and offer a healthy dose of arcade-style fun. Comparing the two, Fantastic Journey is just a little too challenging for its own good, so casual players may prefer to get revved up to play Big Race USA. But, either way you play it, these releases will likely bring back many fond memories of simpler gaming days.

Bottom Line

Both Big Race USA and Fantastic Journey are enjoyable and realistic enough to appeal to both serious pinball lovers and casual players who are simply looking for an entertaining dose of classic arcade action. However, the gameplay may be too challenging for some, and inevitably they get a little bit repetitive in the long run.

Score: 81%

SILVER

Compatibility

1-4 Players

Vibration Function Compatible

BY ERIC WINDING

NCAA FOOTBALL 2001

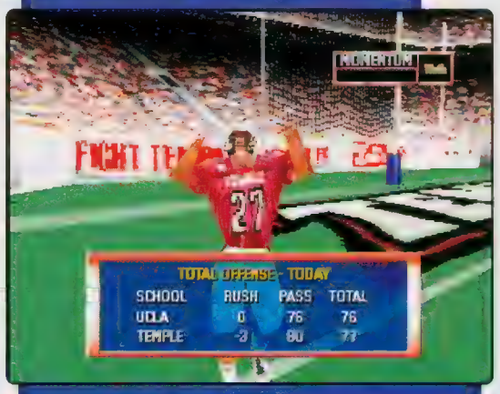
Genre	Football
Publisher	EA Sports
Developer	Tiburon
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

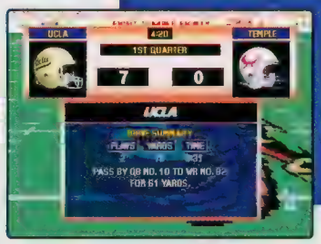
It's funny how certain thoughts or memories come to life by the mention or sight of something totally unrelated. In this case , however, it's not funny because the instigator of the flashback is completely related, that is, the sight of EA Sports' new college football game, NCAA Football 2001. You see, the moment I saw the disk on my desk, I immediately thought "Hmm, I'll bet it plays just like last year's game, which, in turn, played an awful lot like the game the year before that". Then, I remembered having a meeting with some producer types and PR guys, whose main focus at the time was to tell me how DIFFERENT the game was from their Madden football series, and that the two games were being developed by two different studios and didn't share any of the same code. The reason for this identity separation, if you listened between the lines, was to sluff off Sony's NCAA GameBreaker game as just a mirror image of their NFL GameDay franchise, wrapped in college packaging. It was an attempt at saying "our game is unique & different". Why do I even remember this brief encounter three years later? Probably because I can't help thinking that if only EA Sports had used the Madden framework somewhere along the line, I wouldn't have to keep playing this crappy college game! So what if both of 989's (Sony) games have the same "feel" and speed? Why would you want to play a severely watered down product just because the uniforms look different? It's like saying "we know you like pizza on Saturday AND Sunday, but on Saturday you can only have the one with no toppings, little cheese, and a burnt crust". The heck with that — I want my pizza SUPREME, whenever I want it, thank you very much!

Food metaphors notwithstanding, our rating of this game has been steadily remaining in the "Ok" area — the low 80's — for the past few years, and I must admit, those scores were being generous. The reality of it is, once I finished my review of the game, I never even looked at it again, let alone played the thing. To me, that's an indication that the game isn't "ok" and that the score needs to reflect that feeling. So, if you've already looked down to the bottom of the page and noticed a "Bronze" score, now you know why — I'll never play NCAA Football 2001 again! Not because it's horrible, which would cause it to garner a Tin ranking, but because it's so darn average. A third string QB, if you will. Or, if you like automobile analogies, a subcompact in an SUV world.

Since I have the PR fact sheet and marketing info at my finger-tips, let me take a moment to analyze what EA Sports claims to be the new features for 2001 (much like I did last month in the GameBreaker review). First of all, I see the phrase "Advanced Player Control (APC)" in big bold letters. This new feature allows you to take control of any player on the field, including linemen. Now, I know there are many of you out there that have been dying to play as an offensive lineman, and now thanks to Uncle EA, you've got your chance. According to the manual, you can "throw power blocks", accomplished by pressing the L2 button. While this may be sound interesting to you big fat guys out there, once you've knocked a guy on his back once, there's really not much reason to do it again. After all, you play the game for the stats and the glory, right? I didn't notice a stat for "knocking guy on butt". The manual also states that you can be a back or receiver that can "cut and streak to the end zone". What? Your receivers never did this before? I guess I never noticed the fact that they all ran straight patterns and avoided the endzone like a kiss from Richard Simmons. Silly me. In a nutshell, the APC is a simple little diversion that you may try a few times, but much like the much-hyped Analog Control Passing of a few years back, it'll disappear from the game playing radar very shortly.

Lastly, the EA PR machine claims that the new version has a deeper dynasty mode (you can now recruit JC transfers — great), but not wanting to suffer through more than one season, I couldn't claim its usefulness. What isn't mentioned is something to the effect of "improved graphics", and the reason for that would be because it looks just as plain today as it did three years ago. The characters appear to have HALF the amount of detail as those characters found in GameBreaker. Blocky little fellows... Oh yeah — there's also something about "revamped defensive AI", but I didn't notice it. I still can chuck the ball into triple coverage, only to have my guy catch the ball 9 times out of 10.



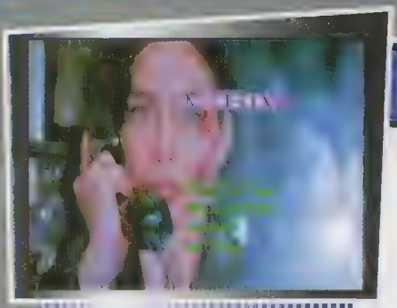


SCORE:

BOTTOM LINE

New features aside, the game remains the same — slippery player control, players with minimal polygonal detail, and suspect computer AI. If ever the franchise needed a life-saving injection of Maddenesque proportions, NCAA Football 2001 does — it's on life-support!

COMPATIBILITY



The Matrix

Warner Brothers **136 Minutes** **Dolby Digital • Widescreen • Dual Layer • Rated R**

For those of you that haven't purchased a DVD system, and instead have been holding out for the PS2, there's no doubt in our minds that The Matrix should be on the top of your X-Mas list. The movie has everything a guy needs — intense special effects, plenty of explosions and guns, a hot chick, kung fu, and even an immersive storyline. With that said, you've probably already seen the movie (most likely more than once or twice), so let's take a look at the extras and goodies found on the DVD. For starters, the DVD's front end is comprised of super high-quality interactive menus which use slickly spliced and edited movie bits to transition from one to the next. In addition, there is an HBO First Look: Making the Matrix documentary, feature-length audio commentary by Carrie-Anne Moss (Trinity), Editor Zach Staenberg and FX supervisor John Gaeta, a music-only audio track featuring commentary by composer Don Davis, and two, very cool interactive options: Follow the White Rabbit and Take the Red Pill. White Rabbit is an option that plays the movie with viewable hidden special effects footage. Whenever you see a white rabbit icon appear on the screen during the movie, you can click on it with your remote (or Dual Shock2) and you will be shown alternate, behind-the-scene angles. Red Pill gives you hidden special effects documentaries for some of the film's major FX-laden scenes. The DVD also has additional enhancements for PC DVD-ROMS, including links to the original Theatrical Website (www.whatisthematrix.com), a quiz titled "The One", where you can win access to an exclusive website, and some other extras, such as glimpses at the movie's screenplay and storyboard and seven special essays and articles (as to whether or not the DVD-ROM feature will work on the American PS2 DVD player is yet to be seen, as these features are not available on the import version). As you can see, The Matrix DVD has a lot more to offer, over and above the excellent movie, and is probably THE DVD movie you should buy to own when you grab your PS2 this October.

Rating:

Jaws

Universal **125 Minutes** **DTS • Dolby Digital • 2.35:1 Anamorphic Widescreen • Rated PG**

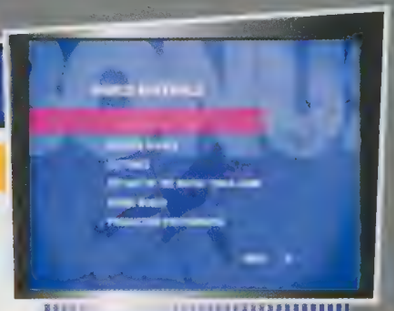
We argued and argued over what other DVD movie should go in the second spot for our premiere issue. With so many newbies getting introduced to the DVD format (what with their new PlayStation2s and all), there is a HUGE wealth of great movies already available to choose from. So, why Jaws? First of all, the 25th Anniversary Collector's Edition was recently released back in July, so it's fairly new and, secondly, it's still such a great freakin' movie. If you're too young to have seen this classic and haven't caught it on cable (or videotape), then you're in for a treat. Jaws was an instant blockbuster and phenomenon when it debuted in 1975 and, today, it is still among the highest-grossing films in motion picture history. Most of us here at Dimension Publishing can recall seeing Jaws in the theaters (yes, this definitely dates us) and remember (reluctantly) how we were afraid to even dip a toe in the wading pool for fear of it being gnawed off — name one other movie that had such an effect on its audience.

Additionally, this is the movie that really put Steven Spielberg on the map, and what would life be like without him... hmm?

Here's what's on the DVD: The Digitally Mastered movie, with both Dolby Digital and DTS sound functions, a ton of never-before-seen deleted scenes and outtakes, the "Spotlight on Location: The Making of Jaws" documentary, original theatrical trailers, production photos and storyboards, a screen saver, and even a "Get Out of the Water" trivia game. While the menus aren't particularly polished and, unlike The Matrix, aren't animated or interactive, the DVD's positives outweigh any negatives.

While there are probably ten or 20 other must-have DVDs that we could list off, you won't go wrong with owning this DVD. Like Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Back to the Future and some of the other Spielberg/Lucas-inspired movies, the original Jaws is timeless. Just do yourself a favor and stay away from the sequels (especially three and four — what were they thinking?).

Rating:



FINAL WORD

David Jon Winding • Publisher

ECON 101: SUPPLY AND DEMAND

You made it! All the way to the back page of the first issue of PSE2 and we haven't lost you. Well, I'll see about that!

As the cloud of secrecy and speculation lifts to reveal the truth of the PS2 launch, things have become much clearer as we draw within 60 days of the system's debut. It seems that, if you don't already have your name on a retailer's list, you are out of luck on 10/26. As of the middle of August, not one retailer in the US has any idea how many units they will be getting from Sony. Because of this, they have become a little skittish in terms of accepting consumers' pre-orders. There are rumors (and a bit of factual information) floating around that suggest Sony won't be able to ship a million units on day 1, and that the quantities that retail can expect in the second shipment (mid to late-November) are highly suspect. Given the three week delay of the hardware launch in Europe, one could assume that there will be a similar delay with the second shipment in the US. Sony has stated all along that their goal was to ship three million PS2's in to North America by the end of their fiscal year (March 31, 2001). But, with worldwide demand comes the necessity of product allocation to ALL markets.

In my mind, it may not make a difference. I believe that there are only so many customers for a product, based not so much on the desire to purchase said product, but the price that one is willing (and able) to pay for it. In Japan, $300 for a video game system doesn't faze the market in the least. In the US, it is a lot of money and a sum that many families are not willing to part with for something as unessential as a video game system (even if it is a "Computer Entertainment System"). If you look at the historical sales of PS1, it took two years for Sony to sell three million of them... and they had a couple of price drops as they went along. They sold around one million units at $300. So, are they saying that, in a five year period, the market for $300 video game systems has increased by a factor of three? I just don't buy it. I believe that, if Sony gets 1.5 million units into NA before the holidays, they will have satisfied the consumers that had to have them. If they manage to ship more than that number, then you should have no problem finding one at your nearest retailer.

Of course, this is all based on what kind of software ships. From what we've seen (admittedly, we haven't seen very much... yet), EA's SSX Snowboarding and the new Madden game look to be the "killer applications" for the PS2 launch in America. Are these the kinds of games that are going to have kids begging their parents for the new system (as Mario 64 did for the N64 launch), so much so that a feeding frenzy is created at retail? In my mind, no. These games are enough to satisfy the hardcore guy who is willing to pay $300 to have the latest, but not the more casual game player. Snowboarding and football will get you a wait-and-see from consumers who feel the price is high, or who depend upon their children to nag them into a major purchase.

So, has the market for video game product exploded while we were holding our Dualshocks over the past couple of years, or is it the same beast, with the same basic consumer? Will Bobby's dad cough up three bills for a combo games system/DVD player, or will he wait for the inevitable price drop(s) — as he did with PS1? We'll know soon enough...

Dave

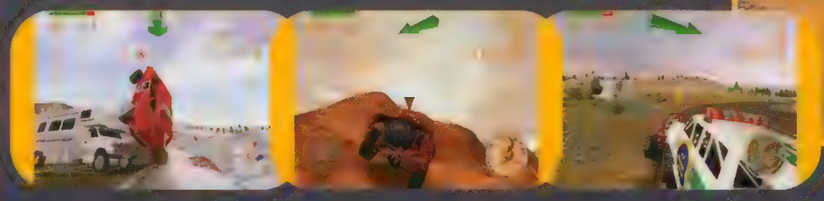
dwinding@psextreme.com

NEXT ISSUE

On the cover

SMUGGLER'S RUN

We're all very excited about the change to PSE2 and look forward to putting together the next issue. We've got our hearts set on putting Smuggler's Run on the cover, since we've all had such a good time playing the early versions that Rockstar has been sending. We'll be sure to also include lots of exclusive features, strategies, more DVD reviews, interviews and special coverage of all the launch titles! Be sure to join us next issue, as we head into the big holiday season. Stay tuned!



ACTION BASS

After a hard day of fishing under the sun or competing in a tournament, you look with awe at the trophies your angling skills have awarded you. In this action-packed arcade style fishing game, the player can either spend time leisurely casting across lake waters waiting for a bite on the line or they can enter an intense fishing competition where the only fish that matters is the biggest catch of the day. Along the way players will face all sorts of challenges including shifting water conditions, unstable weather and even more skilled opponents as he continually attempts to outwit the wily bass during each season of the year. Amazingly realistic fish behavior ensures that no fish is caught without a fight and that reeling in a winner delivers optimum angling action excitement.

- Tournament-style Challenge Mode, free-wheeling Free Mode, and an Extra Bonus Mode.
- Lure Action Gauge allows the player to monitor lure movement easily.
- Enjoy watching fish (up to five heaviest) you brought back in the Aquarium Mode.
- Five diverse lures are available at the beginning, covering a wide range of water conditions and lure movements. More lures will be available as the player gains experience.
- Wide variety of "lure action" possible to attract bass, some requiring retrieving or rod movements only, others requiring skillful combination of the two.

$9.99* GOT GAME? **$9.99***

*Suggested Retail Price

WWW.TAKE2GAMES.COM

SPEC OPS:
STEALTH PATROL

Welcome to the US Army Rangers, one of the toughest and most elite of the world's military task forces. Your main objective is to control your team of Rangers and eliminate opponent targets while completing mission sub-tasks in the time allotted. Choose between stealth or all out frontal assault- it's up to you. 3D action, time pressure and realistic combat will keep you begging for more.
Immersed in huge, outdoor 3D environments you and your team members must successfully execute your tasks which revolve around several different mission objectives including reprisal attacks, seize and destroy missions, counter-terrorist attacks and raid and destroy missions. Each environment is unique, not only in look and feel, but in game play as well. With the emphasis on action and realism, navigate your team with guns blazing or silently under the cover of darkness across landscapes of thick jungle, barren desert, arctic tundra and dense forest.

Do you have what it takes? Will you be able to complete your mission, though you may be the lone survivor?

- :: 5 intense mission campaigns each with numerous sub-missions based on real activities carried out by the US Army Rangers
- :: An arsenal to choose from including shotguns, grenades, machine guns, sniper rifles and more
- :: 3 difficulty levels - Private (Easy), Corporal (Medium), Sergeant (Difficult) offers massive replay value
- :: In the 2 Ranger option the player has simultaneous control of 2 Rangers
- :: Create an inventory filled with hi-tech equipment to aid the Rangers in their tasks - GPS navigation for moving through dense landscape, tripwire mines to booby trap enemies, nightvision goggles for stealth accuracy, med kits for injury repair and more

$9.99* GOT GAME? $9.99*

*Suggested Retail Price

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DARKSTONE

Roll with the punches! Roll over the competition!

SPIN JAM

Ultra-addictive arcade action puzzler!!!!!!!!!!

MARTIAN GOTHIC

Horror on an intergalactic scale!!

BALL BREAKERS

Roll with the punches! Roll over the competition!

PRO-PINBALL

BIG RACE USA

Pro Pinball: Big Race USA delivers more adrenaline-pumping action than your brain can handle!

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SPEEDBALL 2100

Extreme sports have been taken to the next Level!

GRUDGE WARRIORS

There is no such thing as friendly fire.

FORD RACING

Pulse pounding white knuckle action of bass fishing is here!!

PRO-PINBALL
FANTASTIC JOURNEY

Steam powered time travel will whisk you away into the world of pinball.

* Suggested Retail Price=$9.99.

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

TAKE2 Interactive

PlayStation

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